



**Governing Council
of the United Nations
Environment Programme**

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**Twenty-third session of the Governing Council/
Global Ministerial Environment Forum**
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Policy statement of the Executive Director

I. Introduction

1. The twenty-third session of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum comes after a year of momentous events that have taken place since the Council/Forum met on the island of Jeju in the Republic of Korea in March 2004. Foremost among them were the earthquake and Tsunami that devastated the coastlines of countries throughout southern and southeast Asia with tragic consequences, including untold loss of life and property. The international community has responded in an unprecedented way, demonstrating that, despite the differences that may exist, it is united in the face of such calamity.

2. While the focus of the international response must be to provide humanitarian assistance to enable affected populations to recover from the devastation of their lives and homes, the occurrence of a natural disaster of the scale of this tsunami underlines the necessity of examining the issue of vulnerability and early warning for natural and environmental disasters and their environmental consequences. The process has been initiated with the Kobe World Conference on Disaster Reduction, and UNEP must also contribute fully to this international effort. We express our heartfelt sympathy for the people and Governments of the affected region, and have made available our expertise for the assessment of the environmental consequences of the disaster.

3. The coming year will be of great significance to the United Nations system as a whole, as we prepare for a summit-level session of the General Assembly on the five-year review of the United Nations Millennium Declaration in September. At that session, the international community will come together at the highest levels to review progress in the implementation of internationally agreed development goals, including those related to environment and sustainable development. It will be an opportunity to reiterate once again the agenda defined by the international conferences and summits of recent years, including the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and advance their implementation. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation continues to be of primary importance in the further implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, and in this regard we must demonstrate that environmental sustainability is an imperative in the quest for sustainable development.

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4. In preparation for the summit-level session, a report on the Millennium Project entitled “Investing in development: a practical guide to achieve the Millennium Development Goals”, prepared under the leadership of Professor Jeffrey Sachs, an adviser to the Secretary-General, was released in January. The report contains ten key recommendations on issues ranging from poverty reduction strategies and programmes, investment, governance and civil society engagement to regional cooperation, increased official development assistance, market access, scientific research and capacity-building and coordination within the United Nations system. The report provides a blueprint for actions required to meet the Millennium Development Goals and recognizes the importance of environmental sustainability as a necessary condition for meeting these goals. The centrality of the relationship between environmental sustainability and development has been eloquently summed up in the Millennium Projects Task Force report on environmental sustainability, which states “quite simply, environmental sustainability is the foundation upon which achieving all the other Millennium Development Goals must be built”. Our discussions at this session will also provide important environmental input to the forthcoming session of the Commission on Sustainable Development in its policy year when it considers the issues related to water, sanitation and human settlements.

5. The summit-level review of the Millennium Declaration will also feature consideration of a report by the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, entitled “A more secured world: a shared responsibility”. In defining the case for collective security, the report states that “[t]oday’s threats recognize no national boundaries, are connected, and must be addressed at the global and regional, as well as national levels.” With respect to the environment, the report goes on to highlight the contribution of environmental degradation to the enhanced destructive potential of natural disasters; the need for coherent governance structures to tackle global environmental degradation; the need for better implementation and enforcement of multilateral treaties on the environment; and the need for better cross-sectoral coordination at the national and international levels.

6. The report contains recommendations on environment-related matters that include the following:

- (a) Incentives for the development of renewable energy;
- (b) Phase out of environmentally harmful subsidies, particularly with respect to fossil fuels;
- (c) Reengagement on the problem of global warming and the commencement of new negotiations to produce a new long-term strategy for reducing global warming beyond the Kyoto Protocol;
- (d) The need for UNEP, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank to work in a more integrated fashion to improve vulnerability assessments and work with the most affected Governments to improve their adaptive capacity.

7. In addition to the foregoing reports, the Secretary-General will himself prepare a report with recommendations for action by the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, including on matters related to environment and sustainable development. A substantive discussion and a clear, prioritized, and action-oriented communiqué from environmental ministers and heads of delegations gathered at this session must underscore the relationship between environmental sustainability and economic development.

8. The focus of the ministerial segment of the twenty-third session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum will be on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. Accordingly, the high-level representatives attending the session will have the opportunity to discuss this issue and to provide their input for the high-level session on the review of the Millennium Declaration from the environmental perspective.

II. Outcomes of major intergovernmental meetings

9. Over the last year, the outcomes of major intergovernmental meetings (see document UNEP/GC.23/4) have underscored that environmental issues have a direct bearing on many issues, including peace and security, poverty, development and reconstruction and others. Environmental issues figured prominently at the fifty-ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly, and consequently resulted in a large number of resolutions relevant to the work of UNEP. (See document UNEP/GC.23/INF/3 for a discussion of the General Assembly resolutions relevant to the work of UNEP.)

10. In resolution 59/226, the Assembly, taking note of the report of the Governing Council's special session in Jeju, called upon all countries to further engage in the negotiations for an intergovernmental strategic plan for technology support and capacity-building, with a view to its adoption at the current session. It asked the Secretary-General to submit a report on the important but complex issue of establishing universal membership in the UNEP Governing Council to the Assembly at its sixty-first session. It also noted the Council's decision to discuss at the twenty-third session domestic, industrial and hazardous waste management, and the strengthening of the scientific base of UNEP. The Assembly further reiterated the need for stable, adequate and predictable financial resources for UNEP and welcomed progress on strengthening the role and financial situation of UNEP, including a significant broadening of the donor base and increase in total contributions to the Environment Fund.

11. A number of conferences of the parties to multilateral environment agreements have met over the past year, and have achieved significant results and progress. All have a bearing on the work programme of UNEP and how UNEP, as a member of the broader United Nations family, pursues implementation of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and other internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration. Documents outlining the outcomes of these meetings are available to the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum.

12. Most recently, at its tenth session, held in Buenos Aires in December 2004, the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change marked ten years of action under the convention by adopting a package of measures aimed at helping countries to prepare for climate change. Just this month, we celebrate the fact that the goal pledged in the Millennium Declaration to ensure the entry into force of the Convention's Kyoto Protocol was finally realized, following its ratification by the Russian Federation, thereby ensuring the continuity of mitigation efforts into the next decade.

13. Although biodiversity continues to be lost at an alarming rate, there has been very real progress in pressing for the full implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity. At the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the convention, held in Kuala Lumpur in February 2004, Parties agreed on a more quantitative approach to significantly reducing the current rate of biodiversity loss by 2010 (a target endorsed in 2002 by ministers at the previous meeting of the Conference and at the Johannesburg Summit). By adopting measurable indicators and specific goals for the overall 2010 targets, it is hoped that there will be a more accurate monitoring of progress – or the lack of it – in reversing the modern extinction crisis. Another major accomplishment was the launching of new talks on how to craft an international regime on access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing, which will need to protect the interests of indigenous and local communities, commercial firms, consumers and all other key stakeholders. Progress has also been made with regard to the harmonization of reporting on biodiversity-related conventions and interlinkages with other "Rio conventions". Important steps forward were also made with regard to the convention's Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety; the Meeting of the Parties at its first session, also held in Kuala Lumpur in February 2004, adopted documentation requirements and other procedures for promoting the safety of international trade in living or genetically modified organisms. The path-breaking work by UNEP on capacity-building in developing countries for the implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety continues to be essential.

14. In November 2004, the Sixteenth Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol was held in Prague, Czech Republic. The Meeting adopted decisions on the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol and on issues related to ratification, data reporting, compliance, international and illegal trade and financial and administrative matters. Work on methyl bromide exemptions for 2006 was not completed, however, so an "extraordinary" Meeting of the Parties will be held in mid-2005 to address that important issue further.

15. The seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal was held from 25 to 29 October 2004 in Geneva, Switzerland. The Conference of the Parties adopted decisions on definitions of hazardous wastes, hazardous waste characteristics and a number of technical guidelines, as well as guidance elements for bilateral, multilateral or regional agreements, follow-up to the Johannesburg Summit, the budget and work plan for 2005–2006 and the Strategic Plan for the Implementation of the Basel Convention.

16. Notwithstanding the importance of these meetings, the recent Mauritius International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the Kobe World Conference on Disaster Reduction, which both took place shortly after the tsunami disaster that struck southern Asia, deserve special mention. The Mauritius

meeting resulted in the adoption of a strategy for implementation that is highly relevant to UNEP work and activities on issues ranging from climate change and sea-level rise, natural and environmental disasters, coastal and marine resources, management of wastes, freshwater, land, energy, tourism and biological resources, science and technology, to sustainable production and consumption. In analyzing the outcome of the meeting, UNEP will respond to the call of the highly vulnerable small island developing States by integrating the Mauritius outcome throughout its work and establishing a structure responsible for follow-up actions.

17. The disaster reduction conference resulted in countries pledging to reduce the risks facing millions of people who are exposed to natural calamities. There was also clear recognition of the importance of placing the environmental dimension firmly in the disaster reduction equation. The conference participants adopted the “Hyogo Framework for Action: 2005–2015,” which calls for putting disaster risk at the centre of national sustainable development policies, strengthening the capacity of disaster-prone countries to address risk and investing heavily in disaster preparedness. The participants also adopted a declaration recommending that a “culture of disaster prevention and resilience” be fostered and recognizing the relationship between disaster reduction, sustainable development and poverty reduction. They also emphasized that adaptation to climate change in reducing disaster risk was a priority. UNEP will work closely with partners in the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and others to assess implementation of the Hyogo Framework and provide all necessary expertise and assistance for the establishment of a comprehensive early-warning system for natural hazards.

18. These intergovernmental processes continues to strengthen the international environmental agenda, but as environmental issues are infused across the broad reach of the work of the United Nations, the UNEP mandate to promote cooperation and coordination is rendered ever more challenging, and continuing efforts to rationalize the work of the various international environmental conventions and bodies becomes ever more important.

III. Focus of the twenty-third session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum

19. The current session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum will stress the twin themes of implementation, which was a major thrust of the Johannesburg Summit, and placing environment clearly in the context of development. It has become clear that the international community sees a need to implement agreed goals and instruments better rather than develop new policy instruments. This echoes the message emanating from the Johannesburg Summit and the Millennium Summit that environment, as a key component of sustainable development, must be approached in the context of development at the global, regional and national levels. It is increasingly evident that, particularly in developing countries, concrete measures must be taken to manage sustainably the natural resource base if the Millennium Development Goals are to be met and if the vicious circle of poverty, disease, environmental degradation and insecurity is to be broken.

20. The ministerial segment of the twenty-third session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum is structured in a way that is intended to respond to this conceptual approach, particularly in the light of the approaching General Assembly high-level session to review the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. It is also structured to enhance ministerial discussions and conclusions on this central interrelationship between environmental sustainability, economic development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The ministers and heads of delegations will review policy issues related to water, sanitation and human settlements in the context of the Millennium Development Goals related to extreme poverty and hunger (goal 1), ensuring environmental sustainability (goal 7) and gender equality and empowerment of women (goal 3). This will enable ministers and heads of delegations not only to provide their inputs to the forthcoming session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, but also the General Assembly’s session on the review of the Millennium Declaration and the 10-year review of the Beijing Women’s Conference.

21. Within this broad conceptual setting, however, there is also a need to ensure that UNEP continues to concentrate on delivering results in its traditional areas of competence. In this regard, the five areas of concentration established by the Governing Council at its fifth special session will continue to provide the framework for UNEP efforts. These areas of concentration are:

- (a) Environmental information, assessment and early warning;

- (b) Enhanced coordination of environmental conventions and development of environmental policy instruments;
- (c) Freshwater;
- (d) Technology transfer and industry;
- (e) Support to Africa.

22. Assessment, monitoring and early warning continue to comprise a core area of activity consistent with the UNEP mandate. The strengthening of the scientific base of UNEP will be a major focus of our work emanating from the international environmental governance (IEG) process, and the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum has before it a report of the Executive Director on the contribution of UNEP to addressing substantive environmental challenges. This topic is particularly relevant in the context of the recent Tsunami disaster and increasing attention to vulnerability and early warning, particularly in the context of the Mauritius and Kobe conferences. Strengthening UNEP capacity in science and early warning is an essential component of how it will respond in the future, including in terms of its work on environmental emergencies and post-conflict assessment and rehabilitation. In this regard, the further development and implementation of the science initiative, as agreed in the Cartagena outcome, will be crucial to the development of UNEP capacity, and to providing sound, science-based information for policy development and decision-making. The integration of the existing Global Earth Observing System (GEOS) into this process must be ensured, and will enhance the science initiative and development of an "Environment Watch" as a critical information and decision-making resource for Member States.

23. The regional *Global Environmental Outlook* reports will also continue. The *GEO Yearbook 2004/5* has a special focus on gender, environment and poverty, and has been well received. Last month, UNEP also launched a special series of GEO reports on small island developing States and will continue its work on indicators to illustrate the unique vulnerability of small island developing States, a product that could also assist the Governments of small island developing States to further develop national sustainable development strategies. The continued strengthening of UNEP capacity for assessment and monitoring in the area of biological diversity will be ensured by recent measures that have been taken to strengthen the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre.

24. One of the most serious constraints the world currently faces is the growing decline of freshwater resources. UNEP remains committed to the goal of, by 2015, halving the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and pursuing the development of integrated water resource management and efficiency plans. UNEP work encompasses, through the UNEP water strategy, and with key partners including the Global Water Partnership (GWP), a wide array of activities that are coordinated with other actors in the multilateral system through the UN Water structure. One of the key components of the water strategy remains the Global International Waters Assessment, the framework for a global water assessment strategy focused on priority identification and remedial activities within a holistic context that addresses affecting water resources. The UNEP Collaborating Centre on Water and Environment has provided valuable expertise in the compilation of the World Water Development Report and continues to focus specifically on integrated coastal area and river basin management. The updated UNEP water strategy is before the Council for approval, Governments are requested to consider providing additional funding for its full implementation. The promising performance of the GEMS Water initiative provides important inputs with regard to assessment of water quality and further implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, which, together with the revitalized regional seas programmes and coral reef initiatives, have served to ensure a multifaceted and comprehensive approach by UNEP in this area of concentration. In terms of enhanced coordination of environmental conventions and the development of new policy instruments, UNEP has continued to convene regular meetings of UNEP-administered multilateral environmental agreements and will use the structure of the Environmental Management Group (EMG) to foster close cooperation. EMG has already, over the past year and during the process that resulted in the Bali Strategic Plan on Technology Support and Capacity-Building, done good work to bring components of the system together regarding capacity-building activities in the fields of chemicals and biodiversity, where the convention secretariats have been fully integrated. EMG is also working on a more comprehensive analysis of United Nations environment-related capacity-building activities.

25. UNEP work in technology support and industry has received additional impetus with the development of the Bali Strategic Plan. In the context of implementation, the Bali plan has special significance in transforming the manner in which UNEP will take forward its support to countries.

During the process through which the Plan was developed, UNEP prepared an analysis of its activities in technology support and capacity-building. The Division of Technology, Industry and Economics, together with the Division of Environmental Policy Implementation, will have key roles to play in the Bali plan's implementation. UNEP has the expertise to facilitate the provision of technological support to developing countries and countries with economies in transition and will, through enhanced partnerships with member States, civil society and the private sector, endeavour to increase such support by promoting environmentally sustainable technologies. In this context, ongoing cooperation between UNEP and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, through a joint task force on trade and environment, will be of great importance given the growing impact of trade policies on the environment.

26. Having its headquarters in Nairobi, UNEP continues to have a special relationship with Africa and has supported over the past years the establishment of the African Ministerial Conference on Water. UNEP continues to provide also the secretariat for the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment and we have, in close collaboration with the Global Environment Facility, specifically focused on support for the priority areas of the Environment Initiative of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which include wetlands conservation, invasive alien species, coastal management, global warming, desertification, trans-boundary conservation areas, environmental governance and finance. These activities all serve the overall objective of combating poverty through the prism of environment for development.

IV. 2006–2007 work programme and budget

27. The proposed 2006–2007 work programme and budget have been extensively discussed by the Committee of Permanent Representatives in Nairobi and have been considered by both the United Nations Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in New York (see document UNEP/GC.23/8/Add.1). The budget reflects an overall increase of \$14 million over the previous biennium, including an increase in the amount of the work programme of \$12 million, approximately 13 per cent above the level of the 2004–2005 budget. This continues the trend established in the last biennial work programme and budget for 2004–2005, which increased by approximately 10 per cent. Performance in terms of contributions against the 2004–2005 budget has been extremely positive, and the level attained is somewhat above the agreed budget envelope. This positive trend in the financial situation has been further strengthened by the very positive performance of the strategic partnerships which have been developed with specific donor Governments. These strategic partnerships have been developed to respond to the demand for funding which is consistent with the priorities established by Governments in the UNEP work programme and budget.

28. In addition to Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum mandates, the broader international policy environment provides valuable direction to the work programme. In this regard, the goals identified in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and other Johannesburg Summit outcomes provide a clear and targeted road map for UNEP. In addition, the Doha Ministerial Declaration of the World Trade Organization, which gave renewed attention to trade and environment issues, the third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, which acknowledged the inextricable link between environment, development and poverty, as well as the outcome of the International Conference on Financing for Development, held at Monterrey, Mexico, provide reference points, as do the more recent International Meeting on small island developing States in Mauritius and the Kobe Disaster Reduction Conference.

29. The proposed programme of work for 2006–2007 is based on strong interlinkages among the seven UNEP subprogrammes and the Division of Global Environment Facility Coordination.

30. In the field of environmental assessment and early warning, UNEP efforts will focus on keeping under review the state of the global environment and ensuring that emerging environmental issues are brought to the attention of Governments. In this regard, further efforts to strengthen the scientific basis of UNEP and the credibility of environmental data by supporting the development of improved data systems and the development of scientific capacity at the national and regional levels will be essential to developing authoritative environmental assessments and providing early warning to Governments, particularly in light of the impact of recent tragic natural disasters.

31. The translation of scientific information and data into broad policy-based decisions requires a strong policy development component which builds on the consensus resulting from major intergovernmental processes, including the international environmental governance process. The emphasis will be on ensuring that UNEP supports the inclusion of environmental considerations in broader intergovernmental policy processes, facilitates the development of coordinated approaches to environmental priorities within the United Nations system, particularly through EMG, and develops innovative approaches to the broader involvement of all stakeholders in the implementation of intergovernmentally approved priorities. Emphasis will also be given to developing better integrated and interlinked approaches to the implementation of international legal agreements that are fundamental to the achievement of environmentally sound development, as mandated by the Governing Council.

32. A major thrust of the science-based initiatives and policy development work of UNEP will be to support implementation at the national level of intergovernmentally agreed environmental policies, particularly through greater and more coordinated efforts to enhance the capacity of developing countries and countries with economies in transition. The new memorandum of understanding between UNEP and UNDP and the Bali Strategic Plan on Technology Support and Capacity-Building are good steps in that direction, and deserve the strongest backing and financial support. As a concrete example, the new UNDP/UNEP Poverty and Environment Initiative provides a mechanism for significantly scaling up international support to countries on mainstreaming environmental sustainability into national development frameworks, including poverty reduction strategies based on the Millennium Development Goals.

33. The ability of countries and stakeholders to integrate environmental considerations into their decision-making structures and develop environmentally sound policies, strategies and practices will be the continued focus of UNEP work in the industrial and financial sectors. This will include efforts to develop more sustainable patterns of consumption and production, more efficient use of natural resources and a strategic approach to the management of chemicals, and to contribute to developing mutually supportive environment, trade and development strategies. Innovative partnerships with Governments, the private sector and other bodies in the United Nations system will continue to play key roles in that effort.

34. UNEP work with regional and subregional ministerial forums serves to ensure that its policy and programme development responds to the actual concerns of the regions. In the delivery of UNEP programmes, greater attention is being paid to addressing the concerns and emerging priorities of regions and subregions, especially those in the developing world, in particular Africa.

35. An essential ingredient of success in ensuring the implementation of environmental policy is to further increase the general understanding of critical environmental issues at all levels. In this regard, in the development of partnerships with Governments and, in particular, with major groups, further efforts will be made to ensure that environmental issues are adequately covered by the international media and that access to environmental information and encouragement of greater public participation in environmental management are achieved through environmental awareness-raising campaigns. Partnerships with civil society, academia, major groups and the private sector are emerging as powerful and inclusive instruments for moving towards environmentally sustainable development objectives. The experience which UNEP has with partnership extends to areas related to health and environment, clean fuels, sustainable procurement and oceans and seas, among other areas.

36. As a Global Environment Facility implementing agency, UNEP will continue promoting Facility-eligible activities in the Facility's six focal areas. In this regard, special attention will be devoted to African countries, through the NEPAD Environment Initiative, the least developed countries and small island developing States..

37. UNEP is confident that with Government ownership of the programme of work, the targeted budget figure will be realized, and it is hoped that Governments will continue to respond to calls for higher and timely contributions, as has been the case over the past two years. The donor base has increased substantially, to the largest number of contributors ever, a signal of political ownership of the global community in UNEP. As in past years, we will endeavour to find other sources of funding to augment the Environment Fund, from both the public and private sectors. In particular, as has been noted, additional financing will be sought for the implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan, especially as it relates to certain categories of countries such as small island developing States and those affected by disasters.

V. International environmental governance

38. The Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum has before it a progress report on implementation of the Cartagena outcome on international environmental governance, as further endorsed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The strengthening of UNEP scientific capability is an important component of this, and its importance has already been stressed.

39. Another aspect of the international environmental governance outcome is the pilot phase of the voluntary indicative scale of contributions. In considering the possible continuation of the pilot phase, Governments are urged to remember that this remains a voluntary method of increasing the donor base and level of contributions to the Environment Fund. UNEP notes with appreciation the increase in funding that has resulted since Cartagena, in particular on the part of the many developing countries that have contributed. Due in the main to an increase in the number of developing countries participating under this voluntary initiative, the donor base has expanded from around 75 to approximately 125 countries. UNEP also notes with gratitude that the traditional donor countries that have continued to contribute above the levels indicated by this scheme. Nevertheless, the stability and adequacy of UNEP finances fall short of what is necessary for it to achieve what it is expected to deliver.

40. In terms of expanding the membership of the Council, the General Assembly has indicated its desire to consider this complex issue in 2006. The Executive Director has written to member States on this issue a number of times and encouraged Governments to continue sharing their views and perspectives on this matter, which is within the purview of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, before the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, when the Secretary-General is required to report thereon.

41. The adoption of the Bali Strategic Plan on Technology Support and Capacity-Building, in December, by the working group established by the special session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum in Jeju last year, is a testament to the leadership and perseverance of the former President of the Council, Honourable Minister Ntagazwa of the United Republic of Tanzania. All are grateful to him for his hard work, and members are urged to adopt the Bali Strategic Plan at the current session so that its implementation can begin without delay. In this vein it will, of course, be necessary to have sufficient additional resources available, and the plan's success will depend not only on UNEP but also its members. Funding proposals for the plan include a variety of options, from using part of the Environment Fund, which is already being used for capacity-building activities, to selective financing of specific projects and the establishment of a separate mechanism. Consultations between the Executive Director and many Governments on this matter suggest strongly that there is no one-size-fits-all solution. New and alternative arrangements for the implementation of the plan must be considered. While it will be mainstreamed into the overall portfolio of the UNEP work programme, this will be a time-consuming process. If it is truly to be demand driven, it will be difficult to allocate percentages or fixed amounts before Governments specify their needs. In line with the high importance attached by UNEP to the issue of capacity building and technology support, it has been given priority in the proposed 2006–2007 programme of work and budget, in line with the needs and expectations expressed by Governments during the preparation of the Bali Strategic Plan.

42. In implementing the Plan, UNEP will work closely with United Nations partners, especially UNDP, under the new memorandum of understanding. UNEP is also taking firm steps to ensure that environmental considerations are fully integrated in United Nations common country assessments and development assistance frameworks, and UNEP will correspondingly also increase its participation and profile in the United Nations Development Group.

VI. Conclusion

43. The events of the past year have brought in to sharp relief the continuing and mounting concerns of environmental degradation, which has the capacity to undermine all the efforts of countries to achieve sustainable development, economic growth and a stable and productive natural resource base. Environment continues to be a major and important issue on the international agenda, and its relationship to economic development has gained fresh significance.

44. The challenges the international community faces are today more visible and pressing than ever before. Changing weather patterns and instability; increasing deforestation; land degradation and desertification; accelerating loss of biodiversity; vulnerable coastal zones; the mounting environmental consequences of rapid urbanization; threatened water supplies and the warming of the planet have immense consequences for millions of people across the globe.

45. At the same time, the immense outpouring of compassion and generosity towards those who suffered incalculable losses due to natural calamity is once again compelling evidence that despite all that divides us, the international community can come together with a common purpose of ensuring the safety and security of those in need. It must also come together to confront the environmental threats and challenges that it faces to ensure the protection of the global environment that nurtures all and guarantees the world's security and the security of future generations.

46. The outcome of the current session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum must be action and results oriented. In this regard, the Bali Strategic Plan provides a blueprint for UNEP to assist in moving to a more sustainable future and its adoption, operationalization and adequate funding and implementation will be a lasting legacy of the current session.
