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**Assessment, monitoring and early warning:
state of the environment**

**State of the environment and contribution of the United Nations
Environment Programme to addressing substantive
environmental challenges**

Report of the Executive Director

Addendum

Responses to environmental emergencies

Summary

The present report describes progress in the implementation of UNEP Governing Council decisions 22/1 IV, on post-conflict environmental assessment; 22/1 V, on environment in the Occupied Palestinian Territories; and 22/8, on further improvement of environmental emergency prevention, preparedness, assessment, response and mitigation. The report is presented in three main sections, each detailing the progress made by the Secretariat in the implementation of the respective decisions.

* UNEP/GC.23/1.

Introduction

1. The UNEP Post-Conflict Assessment Unit has, since its inception in 2001, conducted post-conflict activities in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, Liberia, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Serbia and Montenegro. UNEP has also joined the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) process as the focal point for environmental issues in Haiti, Iraq, Liberia and Sudan. UNEP has provided technical advice and information management services to the United Nations Compensation Commission (UNCC) concerning various environmental compensation claims from the 1991 Gulf War. A summary of the progress that has been made in each of these operations is provided below.
2. All UNEP post-conflict activities have been externally funded. Major donors include the European Commission and the Governments of Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Additional in-kind support has been received from Finland, Greece, Norway, Russian Federation, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States of America.
3. Following a request made by the UNEP Governing Council at its twenty-first session, the Executive Director prepared the report, *Desk Study on the Environment in the Occupied Palestinian Territories*. At its twenty-second session, the UNEP Governing Council considered the report, and adopted decision 22/1 V. Progress made subsequent to the adoption of that decision is described in this report.
4. The report also describes the response by UNEP and the Joint UNEP/Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Environment Unit to decision 22/8 on the further improvement of environmental emergency prevention, preparedness, assessment, response and mitigation. UNEP has continued to implement activities in the areas of awareness raising, capacity-building and assessment of the environmental impacts of disasters, particularly those that have profound consequences on the environment, as this issue continues to gain wider recognition at the national, regional and global levels. The joint UNEP/OCHA environment unit has continued to implement activities in response to environmental emergencies and to contribute to United Nations system-wide coordinated efforts.

I. Decision 22/1 IV: Post-conflict environmental assessments

5. The links between conflict and the environment are complex, and proper environmental management is essential for reconstruction efforts and long-term peace and stability. To achieve this objective, the Post-Conflict Assessment Unit was established in 2001 to conduct strategic assessments of post-conflict environmental problems. Those assessments identify immediate risks to human health and livelihoods, and provide recommendations on priorities for clean-up, sustainable resource use and strengthening environmental governance.

A. Afghanistan

6. The Post-Conflict Assessment Unit, in cooperation with the Afghan Ministry of Irrigation, Water Resources and the Environment, conducted a post-conflict environmental assessment in Afghanistan in 2002. The final report, entitled *Afghanistan: Post-Conflict Environmental Assessment*, was released in January 2003. Following its release the ministry requested UNEP to develop a 2.5 year comprehensive capacity- and institution-building programme. The purpose of the programme is to develop a stand-alone and self-sufficient department of environment with the required technical capacity to implement the ministry's environmental mandate. The programme will train and mentor a minimum of 45 counterpart staff, provide technical assistance and advice to the ministry on an as-needed basis, and supply the department with basic office and field equipment. The programme is being implemented by the Post-Conflict Assessment Unit from October 2003 to June 2006 in cooperation with the UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, the UNEP Regional Resource Centre for Asia and the Pacific, and the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

B. Bosnia and Herzegovina

7. The Post-Conflict Assessment Unit published its first report, on depleted uranium in Kosovo, in 2001, and in 2002 it published a second report, on depleted uranium in Serbia and Montenegro. A third study by UNEP on depleted uranium was conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to determine the environmental impact and potential health risks seven years after its use in conflict in 1994 and 1995. The final report, entitled *Depleted Uranium in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, was launched in March 2003. Overall, the findings in Bosnia and Herzegovina are consistent with previous UNEP studies on depleted uranium. The report, however, also cites four new and significant findings about how depleted uranium behaves in the environment. The report's recommendations include collecting penetrators from the ground, covering contamination points, properly handling and disposing of depleted uranium-containing material, decontaminating buildings and other places used by people, keeping records of depleted uranium sites and investigating all health claims. As a follow-up activity, UNEP organized a depleted uranium awareness-raising session for de-miners in Bosnia and Herzegovina in October 2003 and produced an informative brochure on potential risks from depleted uranium.

C. Haiti

8. In May 2004, UNDG and the World Bank undertook a mission to Haiti for the purpose of conducting an assessment of the Haitian Government's needs. The Post-Conflict Assessment Unit and the UNEP Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean participated in the mission. Thirteen thematic working groups were established for the mission, including one on the environment. UNEP assisted the environment working group and also provided inputs to other groups such as those dealing with infrastructure, energy and agriculture. A state of the environment report, drafted by the environment working group, was submitted to the mission steering committee.

D. Iraq

9. In 2003, the Post-Conflict Assessment Unit conducted a desk study on the environment in Iraq and organized six environmental roundtables to coordinate activities among key stakeholders. UNEP was also requested to be the lead agency on the cross-cutting issue of environment in the context of a UNDG needs assessment for Iraq. UNEP provided substantive input to the needs assessment, and also assisted in drafting the environmental components of the United Nations strategy for assistance to Iraq. Based on a series of consultations in 2003 and early 2004 with Iraqi environmental authorities, UNEP has identified three project priorities for funding from the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Trust Fund for Iraq. These include strengthening environmental governance in Iraq through environmental assessment and capacity-building; support for environmental management of the Iraqi marshlands; and depleted uranium assessment and capacity-building in Iraq. The first two projects were approved by the UNDG Trust Fund in the summer of 2004.

E. Liberia

10. Following the signing of a peace accord in Accra, Ghana, in August 2003, UNDG and the World Bank undertook a joint needs assessment for Liberia from November 2003 to February 2004 covering 13 priority sectors. The Post-Conflict Assessment Unit was the focal point for the cross-cutting issue of the environment and provided an input paper outlining the key environmental issues to be addressed. To supplement its participation, the Post-Conflict Assessment Unit also published the *Desk Study on the Environment in Liberia*, which it launched in New York at an international reconstruction donors conference that took place on 5 and 6 February 2004. Based on the findings of the desk study, UNEP received an official request in April 2004 from the National Transitional Government of Liberia that it provide additional technical assistance in the areas of environmental policy, law and assessment. Based on this request, UNEP is developing a proposal to strengthen environmental administration in Liberia at the national and local levels through a combination of capacity-building activities, technical advice and the provision of basic equipment. As an input to the programme, UNEP organized and co-hosted, along with the United Nations Mission in Liberia and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a two-day seminar on the environment in Liberia in Monrovia in July 2004. Efforts are now underway to mobilize funds for programme implementation.

F. Serbia and Montenegro

11. Following publication of the 1999 Post-Conflict Assessment Unit report entitled *The Kosovo Conflict – Consequences for the Environment and Human Settlements*, UNEP recommended environmental clean-up and capacity-building for the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (now Serbia and Montenegro). In particular, urgent clean-up actions were needed at four “hot spot” locations in Bor, Kragujevac, Novi Sad and Pancevo. In 2000, UNEP released a feasibility study setting out in detail 27 technical project proposals for clean-up activities at the four sites, totalling \$20 million. During 2001 and 2002, UNEP successfully raised funds in order to carry out 16 of the highest priority remediation projects. In addition, bilateral support was provided for a further six projects from the feasibility study portfolio. All of these projects have improved the environmental situation and significantly reduced risks to human health and well-being. Institutional strengthening and capacity-building has also been a major theme running throughout the clean-up Programme. UNEP post-conflict activities in Serbia and Montenegro came to an end in December 2003. A final report, entitled *From conflict to sustainable development: Assessment and clean-up in Serbia and Montenegro*, was published in May 2004 to provide a detailed account of the main technical achievements of the clean-up operations.

G. Sudan

12. The United Nations has been closely monitoring negotiations both with regard to the Darfur crisis and the North-South peace negotiations in Sudan. A joint mission co-led by the United Nations and the World Bank to provide an assessment of rehabilitation and transitional recovery needs over the next two years, has been initiated. The Post-Conflict Assessment Unit is the focal point for the cross-cutting issue of the environment. The final mission report is expected to be finalized in early 2005.

H. Support to the United Nations Compensation Commission

13. UNCC has sought the assistance of the Post-Conflict Assessment Unit for a period of two years with its processing of environmental claims (also known as category F4 claims). Pursuant to the agreed terms of assistance, UNEP has organized and managed environmental data associated with 69 monitoring and assessment projects and has provided technical advice on an as-needed basis. In addition, UNEP has provided eight review reports of environmental studies being completed by claimant countries, made five presentations to the panel of commissioners that decides environmental claims, and arranged interface meetings with all claimant countries to assist them in preparing and transmitting their data in a manner which facilitates easy access by the Panel of Commissioners and their associated experts. The UNCC process is scheduled to come to an end in December 2004. UNEP, with the concurrence of the claimant countries, is currently engaged in advising the panel on how the results from the studies can be made available to a wider audience in the region.

II. Decision 22/1 V: Environment in the Occupied Palestinian Territories

14. Subsequent to the adoption of decision 22/1 V by the Governing Council, The Post-Conflict Assessment Unit convened a trilateral technical meeting on environmental issues to discuss implementation of the decision, including the recommendations contained in the above-mentioned UNEP desk study. The meeting discussed the next steps to be undertaken by UNEP under eight jointly agreed priority desk study recommendations. Following this, the Post-Conflict Assessment Unit launched a series of capacity-building training seminars for Palestinian officials, including on communications and the environment, on environmental quality standards on wastewater and air pollution, on environmental impact assessment, and on environmental policy making and environmental laboratory analysis.

III. Decision 22/8: Further improvement of environmental emergency prevention, preparedness, assessment, response and mitigation

A. Response to environmental emergencies

15. The joint UNEP/OCHA environment unit, a unique collaborative arrangement between the United Nations Environment Programme and OCHA, has operated for over ten years now. The Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit ensures an integrated United Nations emergency response mechanism for countries facing environmental emergencies and natural disasters with significant environmental impacts. The cooperation of the two organizations results in the integration of the specialized environmental expertise of UNEP and the basic mandate of OCHA and its overall humanitarian response mechanisms to natural disasters.

16. In the implementation of decision 22/8, the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit has played an important role by responding to requests for international assistance from Governments in cases of environmental emergencies, including in Morocco, Pakistan, the Seychelles and Serbia and Montenegro.

17. In providing the assistance, the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) mechanism has proven again to be an important tool for disaster response in the case of both environmental emergencies and natural disasters with negative environmental consequences. UNDAC is a stand-by team of disaster management professionals who are nominated and funded by member Governments, OCHA, UNDP and operational humanitarian United Nations agencies such as the World Food Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Health Organization. UNDAC is managed by OCHA. Upon request of a disaster-stricken country, the UNDAC team can be deployed within hours to carry out rapid assessment of priority needs and to support national authorities and the United Nations Resident Coordinator to coordinate international relief on-site. Members of the UNDAC team are permanently on stand-by for deployment on relief missions anywhere in the world.

18. In January 2003, UNEP and OCHA responded to a request for international assistance concerning a phenol spill in the Sitnica and Ibar river system in Kosovo. The assessment mission identified underlying causes and a number of sources of pollution and made recommendations for improving the situation.

19. In March 2003, UNEP and OCHA undertook a biodiversity and disaster management assessment mission at the request of the Government of the Seychelles following damage caused by a September 2002 tropical depression storm. Their recommendations aimed at improving the Seychelles' national disaster management capacity and protecting its biodiversity. A follow-up to the assessment was the development of a national risk and disaster development strategy. DISASTER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY for Seychelles in March 2004.

20. An oil spill, 30 kilometres outside Rabat, Morocco, occurred in April 2003. The Moroccan authorities requested assistance and UNEP and OCHA responded with the deployment of an assessment team to establish the causes of the spill and assess its humanitarian and environmental impacts. Recommendations to the Moroccan authorities were provided to prevent such an accident from reoccurring.

21. At the request of the Government of Pakistan in February 2003, UNEP assisted Pakistan in matters relating to the environmental impact of an oil spill, measures to reduce the resulting damage and future needs for environmental emergency prevention, preparedness and response. As a follow-up to the assistance, UNEP has embarked on developing, together with the International Maritime Organization (IMO), a natural resource damage assessment and restoration manual. The manual is intended to serve as an important tool in the assessment and restoration of natural resources in the event of an oil spill disaster.

22. Also, at the request of the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, UNEP undertook from 28 October to 7 November 2003 an assessment of the impact of refugees on the environment in the country's western region, focusing primarily on forest, water and land resources as well as waste management in refugee camps.

23. Following devastating floods in Kenya in May 2003, UNEP undertook in December 2003 an assessment of Kenya's resilience to extreme climate events, focusing on existing disaster management

programmes for preparedness for and response to the environmental effects of floods and early warning systems for hydrological disaster events.

24. Trends clearly show that natural disasters and their adverse effects on populations are increasing, as are impacts from technological disasters. Climate change, unsustainable development practices like deforestation, poverty and uncontrolled urbanization all contribute to these trends. In response UNEP continues to strengthen its capacity to address natural disasters with significant environmental impacts, including by enhancing the global network of environment and disaster experts that support its response activities. The Environmental Emergencies Partnership supports these efforts through practical initiatives that strengthen collaboration and information sharing between international, national and regional environmental emergency stakeholders.

B. The Environmental Emergencies Partnership

25. The Environmental Emergencies Partnership was officially launched at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development by OCHA and UNEP with the goal of reducing the frequency and severity of environmental emergencies. It is a global mechanism to strengthen international collaboration and cooperation for the better management of environmental emergencies, including through facilitating collaborative projects, generating broader stakeholder involvement, and developing and sharing knowledge and resources. A wide range of national authorities and regional and international organizations support the partnership. The partnership is now in an implementation phase, with several successful initiatives in 2004.

26. In July 2004, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran joined the partnership after inviting the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit to conduct a 'lessons learned' mission related to a recent train disaster. This mission could reduce the risk of future emergencies, by learning and disseminating the lessons from past ones.

27. The Environmental Emergencies Partnership secretariat, with the secretariat of the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (hosted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe) and the European Commission, has streamlined and simplified the request procedure for environmental emergency assistance by developing a unified request format. Further activities along these lines are foreseen.

28. The Environmental Emergencies Partnership secretariat, hosted by the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit, conducted outreach activities at the 2004 Commission on Sustainable Development Partnerships Fair in New York, and also hosted an information display at the International Forum on Partnerships for Sustainable Development, held in Rome in March 2004. In addition, a quarterly partnership newsletter is being disseminated to facilitate information exchange between partners, and new partners are being engaged through a range of meetings and outreach activities. A web site for sharing information on global prevention, preparedness and response to disasters (www.humanitarianinfo.org/eep) has also been launched.

C. Capacity-building and training

29. In accordance with decision 22/8, UNEP continues to improve the integration of environmental components into OCHA overall management of emergencies by developing and delivering an environmental emergencies training component of UNDAC induction courses in May, October and November 2004 as well as a UNDAC refresher course in Panama from 31 March to 3 April 2004. The environmental training component increases the environmental awareness and knowledge of general disaster managers on the UNDAC roster. The induction course takes two weeks and prepares participants for the role they will play on-site following a disaster.

30. The Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit, in collaboration with the Swedish Rescue Services Agency, delivered training to approximately 60 disaster managers in a course on international environmental disaster operations in September 2003 and 2004, respectively. The course increased the knowledge, preparedness and experience (through simulation exercises) of the participants regarding response to environmental emergencies. In 2004 for the first time two participants from developing countries (Swaziland and Zimbabwe) participated.

31. Over the years, the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit has developed a number of practical tools, including guidelines for the development of a national environment contingency plan and for environmental assessment following chemical accidents. In 2003 and 2004, the unit provided expertise and financial support for the development of guidelines for rapid environmental impact assessment by the Benfield Hazard Research Centre of University College London. The guidelines have been

developed and field tested, and the joint unit is currently exploring their further application, for example to assess the negative environmental impacts of natural disasters. The guidelines are available from the joint unit web site (<http://ochaonline.un.org/ochaunep>). They provide a practical tool for relief workers who do not necessarily have a strong background in environmental issues, enabling them to undertake a rapid assessment of the environmental impacts of a disaster.

32. In June 2004, the Environmental Emergencies Partnership, with support from UNEP, OCHA, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations University and the Global Fire Monitoring Centre, organized an advanced wildland fire management training course in Nelspruit, South Africa. The course, which was aimed at the Southern Africa Development Corporation COMMUNITY region, focused on management, including risk and vulnerability reduction, of forest, grassland and savannas fire disasters caused by human and natural activities. Delegates from 12 African countries concluded the course with the Nelspruit Declaration on Wildland Fire Management.

33. In May 2004, UNEP developed profiles of institutions working on disaster and environmental risk reduction in Africa. The profiles are intended to enhance information exchange and promote coordination of efforts in the management of disasters in the region.

34. In addition, UNEP continues to produce a newsletter focusing on specific disasters. The first issue of the Environmental Emergencies News was produced in early 2003. The newsletter serves as a tool for disseminating information and educating communities about the environmental dimension of the management cycle of disasters, and illustrates the UNEP contribution in the field of environmental emergencies. The second issue, which focuses on the recent increase in frequency and intensity of drought disaster events, was disseminated and web-enabled in March 2004. A third issue, focusing on floods, is currently under preparation.

35. Furthermore, UNEP, the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) and the and the Climate Prediction and Applications Centre of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) produced in March 2004 a joint publication on environmental and flood management specifically targeting school children to raise their awareness and create an understanding of the causes of floods and their impact on society.

36. Also, a number of UNEP and ISDR joint activities have been undertaken to strengthen capacities and promote regional perspectives in the area of disaster reduction and management. UNEP, the ISDR regional office for Africa, the secretariat of the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the African Union organized in Nairobi, Kenya in June 2003 a consultative meeting on disaster risk management with a view to developing a regional programme for disaster reduction in Africa. Following this, an African regional workshop on environmental disasters was held in Nairobi, Kenya from 28 to 30 July 2003 to promote awareness and interactive dialogue among experts on disaster reduction and environmental emergencies management in Africa. In addition, a workshop was organized in Lesotho in February 2004 on national legislation and institutions for environmental disasters in selected countries in southern Africa (Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique and Swaziland), with a focus on disaster prevention and risk reduction in southern Africa. The workshop served as a forum to raise awareness of the interlinkages between environmental degradation, disaster risk and vulnerability, and emphasized the need for appropriate legislative and institutional frameworks for environmental emergency prevention, preparedness, response and mitigation, as well as disaster risk reduction at the national, sub regional and regional levels.

D. Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies

37. Following the adoption of decision 22/8, the Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies¹ held its fifth meeting on 14 and 15 May 2003 in Geneva, Switzerland. The meeting was attended by almost a hundred participants from 27 countries. In addition, many important international organizations, industrial associations, non-governmental organizations and representatives of the private sector were present. The purpose of the meeting was to review the work of the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit and to provide guidance on areas for development and future activities.

38. The Advisory Group recognized the important role of the joint unit in the mobilization and coordination of international assistance to environmental emergency response. It also emphasized the joint unit's willingness to better integrate preparedness and response activities. In addition, the important role of the UNDAC mechanism in emergency response and the integration of environmental components in the overall management of natural disasters by OCHA was stressed. The Advisory

¹ AGEE was established in 1994 as a governmental consultative mechanism following recommendations by Governments

Group further expressed its satisfaction with and support for continued constructive collaboration between UNEP and OCHA in the mobilization of international assistance for countries facing environmental emergencies. It also recalled the three thrusts for 2004 and 2005: to continue to coordinate and mobilize assistance in the event of environmental emergencies; to improve the integration of environmental components into OCHA overall management of emergencies; and to develop training and capacity-building.

39. The [fifth meeting of the Advisory Group](#) was a special event [in that](#), for the first time, [it included a one-day joint session of the Advisory Group and the UNEP Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies at the Local Level \(APELL\) programme](#). The oldest UNEP programme in the field of environmental emergencies, APELL focuses on impact prevention rather than post-accident response, [and](#) has proven its value. It is widely recognized as a highly successful activity of UNEP. [It](#) is also an important source of information on specialized expertise, which is extensively used by the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit in carrying out emergency operations. In its turn, the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit shares with APELL [the](#) results of response activities in connection with various industrial [and](#) technological accidents.

E. National focal points

40. Following a recommendation emanating from the fifth meeting of the Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies, the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit has analysed its existing network of national focal points and identified areas for further improvement. It has prepared a number of proposals to expand the number of countries in the network, making use of relevant existing networks and improving channels of communication with and between national focal points.

F. Standby agreements

41. In order to increase the number of environmental experts that can be deployed on a UNDAC mission, the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit has developed terms of reference for environmental experts that are included in so-called standby agreements between donor countries and/or donor organizations and OCHA.

G. Review of strategic framework

42. [The foregoing](#) activities have been implemented within [the UNEP Strategic Framework on Environmental Emergency Prevention, Preparedness, Assessment, Mitigation and Response](#). Furthermore, as requested by the [UNEP Governing Council at its twenty-second session](#), UNEP has put in place a process for reviewing the [strategic framework](#). The process involves sending the [strategic framework](#) to individual members of the [Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies](#) for review. On the basis of this, a meeting of [the Advisory Group](#) will be convened to consolidate inputs arising from the individual reviews. Then, [a revised](#) draft of the [strategic framework](#) will be sent to [Governments](#) for comment. [Any comments provided by Governments](#) will [then](#) be incorporated into the revised draft for finalization. The revised document is expected to refocus the [agenda for action in such a way that it is](#) not only targeted at UNEP, but [is](#) also owned by [Governments, United Nations](#) agencies and other international organizations.

H. Activities under way

43. [Large](#) refugee settlements and flows continue in many countries in Africa. [They](#) pose a major threat to environmental resources, [including land, water, forests and biodiversity](#), and create other challenges in the areas of economic development, security and social services. These challenges are exacerbated by [non-existent](#) or weak capacities [for](#) addressing the impacts of refugee situations at [the](#) national and local levels. The challenges [therefore](#) call for better understanding of the environmental dimension of refugee situations and the formulation of appropriate policies as well as [the](#) strengthening of the capacities of [Governments](#) to promote the integration of environment [al considerations](#) into the planning and [management](#) of refugee settlements and flows. [UNEP, with support from the Government of Norway and](#) in close cooperation with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and [the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner](#) for Refugees, is implementing a project on strengthening capacities for integration of environmental dimensions in [the management of](#) refugee settlements and flows [in](#) Angola, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The project is intended to reduce [the](#) risks of environmental emergencies by promoting and raising awareness of the complexity and importance of environmental issues at all phases in planning and management of refugee [settlements and flows](#); strengthening capacity of national and local [Governments](#) to enhance [the](#) integration of [the](#)

THERE IS A FOOT NOTE LINE IN THE PREVIOUS PAGE environmental dimension in refugee situations; and strengthening understanding at the national, local and community levels of the use of environmental vulnerability profiles in planning refugee operations.

44. Global science has acknowledged the relevance of indigenous knowledge and the need for scientific and traditional knowledge to be integrated into environment and development programmes such as those relating to management of natural resources, understanding of natural disasters and mitigation of their impacts. Through indigenous knowledge systems, African people have well-developed traditional strategies for managing the environment and coping with environmental change. These systems and strategies are used to conserve nature and reduce the vulnerability to environmental change caused by hazards such as floods and drought. UNEP recognizes fully the importance of indigenous knowledge in environmental conservation and is therefore currently implementing, in close collaboration with the IGAD Drought Monitoring Centre, the National Meteorological Authority of the United Republic of Tanzania, the University of Witwatersrand and the Swaziland Environment Authority a project intended to promote the harnessing, use and application of indigenous knowledge in environmental conservation and coping mechanisms for flood and drought disasters in Kenya, the United Republic of South Africa, Swaziland and Tanzania. The information obtained will be made accessible to a wide range of users by creating a website and interlinking it with other web sites, including those of UNEP and the African Environment Information Network.
