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**Implementation of the programme of work of the United Nations  
Environment Programme and the relevant decisions of the Governing Council**

**Responses to the recommendations of the Office of Internal  
Oversight on the activities of the Post Conflict Assessment Unit**

**Note by the Executive Director**

The annex to the present note provides information on the responses to the recommendation of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on activities of the Post Conflict Assessment Unit (AA2004/220/01). The annex is being issued without formal editing.

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\* UNEP/GC/24/1.

## Annex

### 1. Background

1. The rapid growth of the UNEP post-conflict activities during recent years led the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) in 2004 to recommend the Executive Director to present a paper to the Governing Council on the Post-Conflict Assessment Unit (PCAU). PCAU has since been transformed into the Post-Conflict Branch in August 2005, and was in January 2007 merged with the Disaster Management Branch.
2. The UN system's framework for crisis prevention and management is a key priority of the current UN reform process. There is also a clear wish to improve the link between prevention, preparedness, response and recovery and to ensure that key cross-cutting issues such as environment are integrated throughout.
3. As part of these reforms, the UN family is looking to UNEP for leadership in assessing the environmental dimensions of conflicts and disasters, integrating environmental needs in recovery processes and strengthening the capacity of national partners and the UN country teams for environmental governance as well as prevention and preparedness.
4. Over the last 30 years the international community has come to the firm recognition and understanding that environmental degradation and mismanagement contribute to disaster vulnerability, as well as conflict.
5. UNEP and OCHA have taken a number of steps to enhance the international community's ability to assist countries affected by, and vulnerable to, natural disasters and environmental emergencies and further strengthen their collaboration through the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit (Joint Unit).

### 2. Progress report

6. On 27 November 2006 the Executive Director decided to consolidate UNEP's existing entities working on disasters and post-conflicts, effective as of 1 January 2007, in order to provide a coherent, systematic and effective approach that adds value and makes an impact at the field level.
7. This new branch is located in Geneva, giving it immediate access to the UN humanitarian community.
8. The branch supports the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit during the immediate response phase. For over 15 years, UNEP has been providing environmental emergency response through the partnership with the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.
9. When needed the immediate response will be followed by a detailed assessment by the new branch, in close cooperation with the respective UNEP Regional Office, based on fieldwork, remote sensing, and laboratory analysis. The recommendations outlined in the assessment report may be implemented at country-level during the early recovery/recovery phase by the UNEP Regional Office concerned, and/or the new branch.
10. OCHA recognizes the need to ensure that environmental issues are reflected fully in disaster response and recovery, and will continue to provide UNEP with access to disaster response tools and mechanisms. UNEP will continue to provide technical expertise to the UN system and to affected countries to ensure that environmental issues are integrated in post-disaster or post-conflict recovery and reconstruction plans.
11. The new branch, in cooperation and coordination with all UNEP Divisions and Regional Offices, will offer the following menu of services to the UN system and national partners:
  - Continue supporting the work carried out by the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit to **mobilise and coordinate urgent international assistance** to environmental emergencies;
  - **Assessment:** conduct rapid appraisals and environmental needs assessments, costing and prioritization to identify impacts and needs during the recovery process;
  - **Environmental expert for the UN family:** act as the focal point for the environment within inter-agency processes and ensure that environmental needs are integrated within national and UN planning documents, workplans and projects;

- **Technical advice and training:** provide scientific, technical and policy advice, as well as training, on reducing environmental risks caused by conflicts and disasters and conducting environmental recovery,
- **Information and coordination:** coordinate the environmental sector and act as a repository of environmental information in early stages until national environmental administrations take over the function;
- **Project implementation:** Implement projects on prevention, preparedness, risk reduction and recovery with substantive UNEP divisions and other UN agencies and partners;
- **Environmental Diplomacy:** assist countries affected by conflicts and disasters to re-establish regional and international environmental linkages, and facilitate the resolution of environmental disputes;
- **Fundraising:** facilitate fundraising for the activities mentioned above.

12. This reform is being conducted within the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building as an example to spearhead a new way of operating that is responsive, service-oriented, demand-driven and fully integrated within the UN family. Post-conflict and disaster management activities are tangible examples of UNEP's actions at the country level.

13. This decision will strengthen the ability of UNEP to, jointly with OCHA, rapidly assess environmental emergencies, provide immediate assistance and implement follow-up projects during the early recovery / recovery period, in a manner that is responsive, service-oriented, demand-driven and fully integrated within the UN family.

14. A new strategy for the activities of the branch shall be prepared in close and constructive cooperation with OCHA, in order to have a jointly agreed strategy ready for the 7th meeting of the Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies (AGEE), in June 2007 in Sweden.

15. The decision to consolidate these field activities also brings UNEP to initiate a review of its current Memorandum of Understanding with United Nations Office for Project Services, which has been the main implementing partner of UNEP activities during the early recovery / recovery period.

### 3. Financial and other contributions

16. UNEP would like to acknowledge the generous financial and in-kind contributions of several Governments and the strong support from the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit.

### 4. Way forward

17. Further implementation of the responses of UNEP to the relevant recommendation of OIOS will await the implementation of the ongoing reform process of the United Nations regarding the system-wide coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment.