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

**Draft updated water policy and strategy of the United Nations
Environment Programme**

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

Ministers and heads of delegations attending the twenty-third session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, held in Nairobi from 21 to 25 February 2005, considered the updated water policy and strategy of the United Nations Environment Programme set forth in document UNEP/GC.23/3/Add.5/Rev.1/Add.1. By its decision 23/2, the Council/Forum adopted the updated water policy and strategy as a general framework and general guidance for the activities of UNEP in the area of water and sanitation for the period 2005–2007. The Council/Forum also requested that a draft updated water policy and strategy should be circulated for the ninth special session of the Council/Forum so that a final draft may be circulated no later than September 2006 for consideration by the Council/Forum at its twenty-fourth session.

The present document sets forth a first draft of the updated water policy and strategy, with a focus on freshwater resources. In that connection, it should be noted that the policies and strategies of UNEP in relation to the interface between fresh and marine water and coastal zones and in relation to regional seas and the marine environment are defined by various intergovernmental processes such as the intergovernmental review meetings of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities and the conferences of the parties to the regional seas conventions.

In the development of the present document, the secretariat has undertaken a review of past and current Governing Council decisions and taken into consideration the adoption of the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building. Particular attention has also been given to current and emerging internationally agreed concepts and definitions as they are reflected in documents emanating from a variety of intergovernmental meetings, including the UNEP Governing Council, the Commission on Sustainable Development, world summits and United Nations conferences relating to water.

(NB: Information on the implementation of the water policy and strategy in the period 2004–2005, requested by paragraph 8 of decision 23/2, is provided in document UNEP/GCSS.IX/INF/10.)

* UNEP/GCSS.IX/1.

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I. Introduction

1. In 2000, the international community agreed on a selected set of goals, in association with the Millennium Declaration.¹ The Declaration provides a blueprint for poverty reduction and accelerated development and was further elaborated in the 2005 World Summit Outcome.² Only one of the Millennium Development Goals – goal 7, and specifically its targets 9 and 10 – directly concerns water and sanitation. However, the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals hinges on the quality and quantity of available water as water plays a disproportionately powerful role through its impact on such factors as food production, hygiene, sanitation and health, food security and vulnerability, and maintenance of ecosystem services.
2. Equitable and sustainable management of water both freshwater (including surface and groundwater) and coastal and marine waters is a major challenge for all water users, particularly the poor. According to the World Water Development Report (2003), concerns about the world water crisis include doubling of the number of poor people without adequate water and sanitation; a growing gap between rich and poor and urban and rural population in water and sanitation services; the rising cost of water-related disasters; declining quality of water resources and ecosystems; underfinancing of the water sector; rising pressures on water resources; increasing industrial water demand and pollution; and the need to strengthen water governance.
3. Since its establishment, UNEP has worked in the area of water resources assessment and management, promoting the application of collaborative approaches to water resources management. After over 30 years, water remains one of the main priorities of UNEP.
4. Many international forums have devoted significant time and effort to develop goals, objectives and targets for water resources management. These forums include UNEP Governing Council; the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and its outcome, Agenda 21;³ the Millennium Summit; the World Summit on Sustainable Development; and of the twelfth and thirteenth sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Those forums have indicated, and in the case of the Governing Council defined, the mandates and responsibilities of UNEP in the area of water.
5. Implementing those mandates rather than developing new ones is the task ahead: moving from planning to action.
6. The present report therefore builds on the mandates which UNEP has received in the area of water rather than defining any new policy and focuses on strategic principles and key components for implementing those mandates. It is the intention that, once adopted, the present document will provide strategic direction for UNEP activities in the area of water for six years and will provide a basis for the development of the UNEP biennial programmes of work. As such, the document will not describe the specific activities which UNEP will conduct in the area of water as those activities will be detailed in consecutive programmes of work in line with the strategic directions proposed in the present report.
7. In developing the present report, the secretariat took into consideration the fact that the twenty-third session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum also adopted the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building.⁴ It is proposed that the implementation of the mandated functions of UNEP in the area of water, particularly at the national and regional level, should be an integral component of the coherent, UNEP-wide delivery, of the Bali Strategic Plan. That being the case, the related activities of UNEP and its partners at the regional and national levels should strive to be mutually supportive and will contribute to strengthening national environmental management capacities and to mainstreaming the environment into economic and social development (i.e., into national strategies for poverty reduction and development).
8. The major purpose of the UNEP water policy and strategy is to facilitate a coordinated, effective and expeditious implementation of the mandated freshwater functions. In the context of the Bali Strategic Plan, the implementation imperative has become even more urgent.

¹ General Assembly resolution 55/2.

² General Assembly resolution 60/1.

³ *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol I: *Resolutions adopted by the Conference*, resolution 1, annex II.

⁴ UNEP/IEG/IGSP/3/4, annex.

9. To implement the UNEP mandates in the area of water and meet the implementation imperative, UNEP proposes to develop, by the time of the twenty-fourth session of the Council/Forum, a strategy along the following lines:

- (a) Setting clear goals and objectives;
- (b) Defining a set of strategic directions to focus the work of UNEP;
- (c) Identifying key components of UNEP freshwater activities;
- (d) Mechanisms for operationalization and monitoring progress.

II. Mandates of UNEP on water

10. UNEP water policy is defined in part by the overall mandate of UNEP as set forth in the resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly. The stated mission of UNEP is:

“To provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing and enabling nations and people to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations.”

11. In 1997, the Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme⁵ further elaborated the mandate to include in particular the roles established in Agenda 21. Chapter 17 of Agenda 21, on oceans, recognizes that the marine environment and adjacent coastal areas are part of an integrated whole that provides a global life-support system and must be considered as an asset for sustainable development. Chapter 17 also stresses the need to boost national capacity for assessment and analysis of coastal resources and suggests international cooperation and coordination through subregional, regional, interregional and global frameworks.

12. As outlined in Chapter 18, on freshwater, the primary objective is to ensure that an adequate quantity of water of good quality is maintained for human activities and also for the proper functioning of ecosystems, and identifies integrated water resources management as the means to satisfy freshwater needs for sustainable development through interactive, multisectoral approaches firmly grounded in institutional, legal and financial frameworks. Both chapter 18 and chapter 17 also noted the need to make adequate water resources assessment technologies available to all countries according to their needs.

13. Governing Council decisions have, over the past 10 years, assigned a great deal of responsibility to UNEP in the area of freshwater and ocean and coastal resource management.

14. The eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-second sessions of the Council/Forum set forth programmes for UNEP involvement in coral reefs, integrated coastal area and river basin management and the control of marine pollution from land-based activities. Specifically, the nineteenth session and the fifth special session also requested UNEP to place a high priority on freshwater and assist developing countries in strengthening their capacities to assess freshwater, disseminate information on best practices, promote corporate voluntary initiatives and public participation in addressing environmental aspects of freshwater, and develop and implement integrated water resources management plans through regional cooperation. The Governing Council also provided mandates on technology transfer for water resource management and pollution control, urban and rural sanitation, promoting corporate social responsibility and public-private partnerships, all of which have important contributions to make to integrated water resources management.

15. In 2000, the international community identified the key development priorities through the establishment of the goals of the Millennium Declaration (Millennium Development Goals). Primary global priorities were identified to be the reduction of poverty and hunger, improvement of human health and achievement of environmental sustainability.

⁵ Governing Council decision 19/1, annex.

16. In 2002, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation⁶ was adopted; the Plan, among other things, contributes towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. In recognition of the seriousness of the freshwater situation in many parts of the world, and of the fact that improved water management is essential for achieving broader economic development goals, an important target (the “IWRM 2005 target”) adopted at the World Summit for Sustainable Development in 2002 was to:

“Develop integrated water resources management and water efficiency plans by 2005, with support to developing countries, through actions at all levels to ... Develop and implement national/regional strategies, plans and programmes with regard to integrated river basin, watershed and groundwater management...”⁷

17. In their consultations during the eighth special session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, held in Jeju, Republic of Korea, in March 2004, Ministers exchanged views on the concept of ecosystems approaches and considered how to promote their use for the purpose of attaining that integrated water resources management target. In that connection, the Ministers and other heads of delegations:

“... stressed that integrated water resources management (IWRM) incorporating an ecosystem approach is a key building block for achieving the water, sanitation and human settlement targets ... for promoting economic growth and achieving targets on health and poverty reduction.”⁸

18. The Ministers and other heads of delegations recognized the following approaches, actions and environmental dimensions underpinning IWRM:⁹

- (a) Cross-sectoral management of water resources;
- (b) National planning process;
- (c) Transboundary approaches;
- (d) Ecosystem-based approach;
- (e) Linking the principles and practice of IWRM with integrated coastal zone management;
- (f) Institutional structure and governance;
- (g) Economic instruments;
- (h) Monitoring, assessment and reporting;
- (i) Stakeholder involvement;
- (j) Capacity-building and training;
- (k) Sustainable technologies.

19. The twenty-third session of the Council/Forum adopted the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building to strengthen the capacity of the Governments of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to enable them, among other things, to achieve their environmental goals, comply with international agreements and implement the programmatic goals set by the Governing Council and other internationally agreed development goals. The indicative thematic areas to be addressed through the Bali Strategic Plan relevant to water include freshwater, pollution, chemicals, waste management, conservation of wetlands, transboundary conservation and sustainable management of natural resources (when agreed by concerned countries), environmental emergency preparedness and response, sanitation, oceans and seas and coastal areas – including regional seas and protection of the marine environment from land-based activities – together with related problems and ecosystems such as land degradation and forests. In this context, the Bali Strategic Plan provides additional guidance to inform the UNEP water policy and strategy.

⁶ Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (*Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II. A.1 and corrigendum), chap I, resolution 2, annex).

⁷ Ibid., para. 26, 26 (a).

⁸ See document UNEP/GCSS.VIII/8, para. 5.

⁹ Ibid., para. 16.

20. In response to decision 23/2, which requested consideration of the key outcomes and recommendations of the thirteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development as they relate to water, the secretariat notes that the Commission's outcomes reinforce the Jeju Initiative, a result of the eighth special session of the Council/Forum.¹⁰ At its thirteenth session, the Commission on Sustainable Development, in subparagraph 3 (d) of its resolution 13/1,¹¹ called on Governments and the United Nations system, inter alia, to accelerate the provision of technical and financial assistance to countries in preparing nationally owned integrated water resources management and water-efficiency plans tailored to country-specific needs, paying particular attention to economic development, social and environmental needs, supporting implementation through learning-by-doing, directed, inter alia, towards the following:

- (a) Improving water governance through strengthening of institutional and regulatory reforms, capacity development and innovation;
- (b) Enhancing the sustainability of ecosystems that provide essential resources and services for human well-being and economic activity in water-related decision-making;
- (c) Facilitating information exchange and knowledge-sharing, including indigenous and local knowledge;
- (d) Strengthening the prevention of pollution resulting from wastewater, solid waste, and industrial and agricultural activities;
- (e) Developing preventive and preparedness measures, as well as risk mitigation and disaster reduction, including early-warning systems;
- (f) Protecting and rehabilitating catchment areas for regulating water flows and improving water quality, taking into account the critical role of ecosystems;
- (g) Involving all stakeholders, including women, youth and local communities, in integrated planning and management of land and water resources;
- (h) Promoting higher priority and greater action on water quality.

Although the above list is not exhaustive, it does enumerate some of the key areas identified by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its thirteenth session which are relevant to UNEP-related mandates and fall within areas in which UNEP has a comparative advantage.

21. In the area of sanitation, in subparagraph 3 (i) of its resolution 13/1, the Commission called upon Governments to:

“Provide adequate sanitation, recognizing the interlinkages among water, sanitation, hygiene and health, including water-borne disease vectors, as well as the positive impacts of access to sanitation on poverty reduction, privacy, dignity, security and education”.

22. Subparagraph 3 (n) of the same resolution calls for wastewater treatment and reuse to be expanded.

23. Under the heading of “Interlinkages and cross-cutting issues”, in subparagraph 3 (x) (iii) of the resolution the Commission called for adequate resources to meet the water, sanitation and human settlements goals and targets to be mobilized by means including enhancing the sustainability of ecosystems that provide essential resources and services for human well-being and economic activity and developing innovative means of financing for their protection.

24. The World Summit in September 2005 reviewed the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and highlighted several areas relevant to the UNEP water policy and strategy, including reiteration of the commitment to Agenda 21, lending further support to the implementation of chapters 17 and 18. Also, the Summit repeated the outcomes of other forums calling for the provision of assistance at the national level towards integrated water resource management, including the coastal areas, and for further cooperation and coordination at all levels in issues related to oceans and seas.

¹⁰ UNEP/GCSS.VIII/8, annex II.

¹¹ In document E/2005/29-E/CN.17/2005/12.

25. The Governing Council, in its decision 23/2, and other forums have also highlighted groundwater as a particular concern. Approximately one third of the world's population depend on groundwater supplies, many of which are transboundary. Because of the vastness of the resource and its particular vulnerability to overuse and contamination, the UNEP Water Programme will enhance work in this area.

26. The long history of UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum debates, decisions and the various versions of the UNEP water policy and strategy demonstrate that the time is ripe to finalize policy and strategic formulations and focus on implementation.

27. In summary, the overall direction of the UNEP water policy and strategy is defined by the Governing Council decisions noted above and also by resolutions of various intergovernmental forums. Various versions of the UNEP water policy and strategy have been submitted for review to previous Governing Council sessions and various revisions have taken place to give cognizance to the outcome of other international forums. Although those various resolutions and forums have deepened the concepts of water resources management and have proposed modalities for implementation, the overall goals and objectives for UNEP in the area of water have not changed fundamentally over the years. Consequently, the present report reflects the existing mandates within a revised strategic framework.

III. Goal and objectives

28. Taking into account the mandates noted above, the overall goal of the UNEP water policy and strategy is to contribute substantively to environmental sustainability in the management of all water resources, including through water resources management and integrated ecosystems approaches as a contribution to the internationally agreed targets and goals relevant to water and socio-economic development.

29. The objectives of the UNEP Water Programme, distilled from its mandates, are:

- (a) Improved assessment and awareness of environmental water issues;
- (b) Improved environmental management of basins, coastal and marine waters;
- (c) Improved cooperation and coordination in the water sector.

IV. Strategic principles

30. As UNEP continues to move towards implementing its water mandates and the goal and objectives above, it will be directed by the following conceptual and operational principles to focus its work.

A. Conceptual principles

1. Promote ecosystem-based approaches

31. All UNEP work in water resources management is founded in ecosystems-based approaches. Ecosystem-based approaches factor in the full range of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, looking at the basin as a whole in both its upstream and downstream dimensions, including, among other things, specific ecosystems such as forests, land, wetlands, urban ecosystems and coastal zones. Though this concept normally conjures up thoughts of surface water, it also includes groundwater. Similarly, the interface between freshwater and coastal ecosystems must also be taken into consideration in management plans for both types of system. Ecosystem approaches recognize the social, cultural, economic and environmental needs for sustainable water resource management. Founded in these ecosystem considerations, UNEP will ensure that the full hydrological cycle within each hydrological basin is taken into consideration in assessment and management plans.

2. Contribute to sound economic and social development, including poverty reduction through integrated assessment and management of water resources and associated ecosystems

32. As stated in the Jeju Initiative leading into the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, water is a vital resource for economic development and must be managed as such. The environmental aspects of socio-economic development will be focus firstly on maintaining the health of ecosystem services which are of particular importance to the poor, and secondly on preventing the

degradation caused by unsustainable natural resource management practices. A shift is needed from an orientation towards supply-side policies to one of more integrated supply- and demand-management approaches which incorporate the value of water for irrigation, drinking water, hydropower and industrial uses while protecting ecosystem services. Consequently, UNEP will promote the greater use of economic instruments such as markets for environmental services, pro-poor environmental fiscal reforms, and incentives to promote the efficient and equitable use of water which manages demand and generates new revenue to expand water services to the poor through the protection of water supplies, with the resultant improvements in healthcare and cost savings, and through the environmentally sound management (including reuse), treatment and disposal of wastewater.

33. In this connection, policies and technologies which reduce demand and increase available supplies (e.g., recycling, reuse and alternative sources) will be promoted in urban and rural settings. Also, policies which promote cleaner production techniques and environmentally sustainable technologies which promote efficient water use and reduce pollution will be encouraged. Where privatization of water resources is implemented, it must be carefully reviewed and considered to ensure that the necessary legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks are in place to protect natural resources so that the poor are not further disadvantaged.

3. Address risks

34. Extreme hydrological events such as floods and droughts exacerbated by increased climatic variability, other natural and man-made hazards and also accidental pollution of water bodies pose major risks to growth and sustainable development. These events should be addressed in the context of an integrated approach to water resources management geared towards developing prevention and preparedness measures, together with risk mitigation and disaster reduction strategies, and towards strengthening the prevention and control of pollution resulting from wastewater, solid wastes and industrial and agricultural activities. UNEP will contribute within its mandate to implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters,¹² which was adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction held from 18 to 22 January 2005 in Kobe, Hyogo, Japan.

B. Operational principles

1. Build national and regional capacity: Implementing the Bali Strategic Plan

35. The Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building provides further guidance for the implementation of the UNEP water policy and strategy, particularly as it relates to coordinated action and cooperation with all relevant partners at the national and regional levels. Technology and capacity-building support by UNEP to the ongoing efforts of national Governments and other actors will be based on a comprehensive, bottom-up and Government-wide assessment of needs. Activities will be linked with efforts already in progress and integrated with other sustainable development initiatives, building on existing capacities. Existing coordinating mechanisms, such as the United Nations Development Group, the UNEP/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) memorandum of understanding and the resident coordinator system, will be utilized to the fullest extent possible to avoid duplication of efforts.

2. Build on existing programmes and partnerships and form new partnerships

36. Partnership is essential for addressing complex and interlinked water issues. Neither UNEP alone, nor any other organization alone, can support Governments in meeting the monumental mandates and challenges described above. That being the case, UNEP will build on existing programmes and partnerships and at the same time establish new ones where appropriate. UNEP, as the United Nations agency responsible for policy guidance and coordination in the area of the environment, will work closely with other United Nations agencies, regional bodies, municipal authorities, scientific institutions, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and relevant sectoral ministries to ensure that ecosystem-based approaches are fully integrated into water resources management.

37. Established programmes and partnerships within UNEP will also continue to be assessed and built upon as appropriate. These include legislative assistance through the Partnership for Development of Environmental Law and Institutions in Africa (PADELIA); assessment through the Global Environmental Monitoring System (GEMS) Water programme; the Global Environment Outlook

¹² See A/CONF.206/6 and Corr.1, chap. I, resolution 2.

(GEO); the Dams and Development Project; technology innovations from the International Environmental Technology Centre (IETC), the International Waters Portfolio of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), rainwater harvesting, the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA), Coral Reefs, and Regional Seas Programmes. Though not an exhaustive list, these frameworks provide a foundation for elaboration.

3. Promote multistakeholder participation

38. Participation by all stakeholders is fundamental to sustainable water resources management. Active consultation and transparency in the process significantly increase the likelihood of sound development and implementation of water resources management initiatives. UNEP actions will promote the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders in water resource planning and management, with a particular emphasis on women and indigenous groups as they are often the most adversely affected by unsustainable management.

V. Strategy for oceans and coasts

39. In recent years, the Governing Council, and therefore the UNEP secretariat, has focused its attention on the downstream parts of basins, i.e., the coasts and further on into the oceans. The Regional Seas Programme was one of the first UNEP programmes and remains an important component of the UNEP Water Programme. More recently, this traditional role has been strengthened through programmes such as GPA, support to small island developing States within the framework of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States¹³ and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States,¹⁴ and attention to coral reef issues through cooperation with the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) and the International Coral Reef Action Network (ICRAN).

40. These programmes are governed by their own intergovernmental processes, such as the intergovernmental review meetings of GPA or the conferences of parties or intergovernmental meetings of the Regional Seas conventions and action plans. These intergovernmental processes define the policies, strategies and programmes of work of the coasts, oceans, islands and coral reef programmes to which UNEP contributes.

41. That being the case, and with no intention of reducing work on marine issues and consistent with the above, it is proposed that the remainder of the present report should focus on freshwater resources, giving due consideration to interactions with the coastal and marine environment.

VI. Freshwater strategy

42. The overall objectives of the UNEP Water Programme are noted in chapter III above. For freshwater, this objective will be implemented within the overall framework of integrated water resources management and efficiency plans. The term “integrated water resources management” as defined by the Global Water Partnership¹⁵ and used in the present document is a process which promotes the coordinated development and management of water, land and related resources in order to maximize the resulting economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems. Thus, integrated water resources management relates to the three Es: Economic development, social Equity and Environmental sustainability.

43. Integrated water resources management involves a wide range of elements – laws and regulation, policies, stakeholder participation and so on – and incorporates aspects including science, technology, economics, culture and society. Incorporating all these elements and aspects also ensures that integrated water resources management is designed and implemented from the standpoint of multiple objectives rather than a single environmental objective.

¹³ *Report of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Bridgetown, Barbados, 25 April–6 May 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.I.18 and corrigenda), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

¹⁴ *Report of the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Port Louis, Mauritius, 10–14 January 2005* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.05.II.A.4 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

¹⁵ Global Water Partnership Technical Advisory Committee, TEC Background Paper No. 4: Integrated Water Resources Management (Stockholm: Global Water Partnership, 2000), p. 22.

44. With the realization that water occurs in a continuum from freshwater over the coastal zone to the ocean, an important element of the UNEP freshwater strategy relates to the development of concepts and mechanisms for the linked management of freshwater resources and coastal waters. The development of modern approaches within those to natural resource management areas is taking place in institutions and scientific and management communities which are basically different, hence the notions of “integrated water resources management” and “integrated coastal zone management”. Nevertheless, freshwater resources play an important role in the coastal environment and to some degree coastal developments affect upstream freshwater resources. Depending on the scale, upstream/downstream integration may include fully integrated river basin-coastal area management planning or building in effective mechanisms for coordinated freshwater and coastal zone management. UNEP, as the secretariat for GPA, will ensure that the implementation of the freshwater strategy contributes to the further implementation of GPA.

VII. Key components for freshwater

45. So far, the present water policy and strategy document has outlined in some detail the mandates which UNEP has been given for water resources and has also proposed some strategic principles to focus and guide UNEP activities in the area of water. UNEP activities in the area of freshwater will be organized into three key and interlinked components: assessment; management; and coordination and cooperation towards integrated water resources management. The overall approach is a complementary process of first identifying water resource problems, including related systems, where they occur, how serious they are, and their cause: this is assessment. Second, the problems which are identified are dealt with by determining what can be done, who should do it and how: this is management. Third, to ensure synergistic work with others so as to maximize efficiency and effectiveness, coordination and cooperation are required. These three mutually supportive and interconnected components provide the foundation to support an integrated water resources management process at national, subregional, regional and global levels.

46. These three components are described individually below. Introductory descriptions are supported by indicative strategic interventions in the logical framework found in the annex to the present report.

A. Assessment

47. Assessments which build the knowledge base for water resources and related ecosystems are the primary element for developing, implementing and evaluating appropriate management measures that take into account the needs of the environment and society. Such assessments must focus not only on the water resources themselves – in terms both of quantity and quality – but should also include the assessment of related ecosystems.

48. Assessment of water resources has three main functions at the national, regional and global levels:

- (a) To provide a knowledge base from which to develop, manage, monitor and evaluate water resources programmes and to encourage the integration of sustainable water resources management into development policies and processes;
- (b) To raise awareness and inform stakeholders of water resources issues and concerns, including demand;
- (c) To assess threats, trends and emerging issues where future action may be needed.

49. Effective water resource management – policy, planning and implementation – depends on an accurate and scientifically credible knowledge base of water resources and water demand, together with socio-economic factors. A sound knowledge base allows the formulation of management plans which are specific on the local, national, subregional and basin-wide levels and is also a basis for action programmes. Likewise, monitoring of water-related ecosystem conditions within an area being managed under a water resources plan provides feedback to decision-makers to enable changes and modifications to the plan so as to assess the value of both the hydrological services of the ecosystems and of the water resources adequately and to maximize sustainable use. Water resource assessments at the subregional, regional and global levels can inform regional and global decision-makers and the public, who can then better guide action programmes.

50. To inform stakeholders, assessments must be clear and tailored to specific audiences while maintaining their scientific integrity. Such information must facilitate and enable interaction and participation by all sectors of society to make informed choices and decisions about managing water resources. As noted above, awareness that includes the interconnectivity of water-related ecosystems is imperative to provide stakeholders with an understanding that enables ecosystem-based water policies to be established which fully reflect the economic, social and environmental value of the resource.

51. The UNEP assessment component will provide information on threats, trends and emerging issues. Threats from natural water-related hazards and threats to water resources are not static. Assessments of new and emerging areas must also be at the core of UNEP work. This will include providing information on the world water situation. Information on trends and possible alternative scenarios can assist in anticipating problems and in taking corrective action before it becomes too late. This subcomponent is also at the heart of an ecosystem-based approach as impacts of concern in interrelated ecosystems can be telltale signs for impending disaster in others. Included in this work will be ensuring that threats from climate change are taken into account, so that management plans can include necessary climate change adaptation measures.

B. Management

52. Integrated water resources management provides an ecosystem-based approach to water resources management which encompasses both water quality and quantity. It builds on the interconnectivity between the various components of the natural resource base, i.e., of ecosystems, and links it with the institutional, social and economic elements of water resources management to provide the integrated management framework needed to deal with the particular problems related to the sustainable maintenance of the ecosystems and the services which they provide.

53. Integrated water resources management also encompasses technical and governance perspectives:

(a) A technical perspective which combines interactions between land, groundwater, surface water and marine resources with respect to quality as well as quantity and the requirements of the ecosystems;

(b) A governance perspective, which includes two key elements, cross-sectoral integration in water resources management and the integration of all stakeholders in the planning and decision-making process:

(i) Cross-sectoral integration makes the institutional linkages between the sectors using or impacting on water resources and water-related ecosystems and implies that water related developments within all economic and social sectors must be taken into account in the overall management of water resources. Thus, water resources policy must be integrated into national economic and national sectoral policies. This means recognizing the value of water and addressing its risks while at the same time ensuring that sustainable management of water resources is effectively integrated into the social and development pathway which is adopted;

(ii) Stakeholder integration ensures that actors such as water users, local and national authorities, regional and subregional bodies and institutions and also United Nations and international financial institutions are involved in decision-making. Stakeholders will vary according to the management and planning level considered. Indigenous peoples, women, and the poor in particular have knowledge to bring which can provide new and innovative ideas for management and efficiency plans;

(c) Integrated water resources management also implies a vertically integrated set-up of water resources management functions at all levels, such as inter-State, national, provincial, municipality and down to the community, from governmental and non-governmental organizations, while promoting the principle of management at the lowest appropriate level.

54. Within an integrated water resources management framework, there are three pillars within which UNEP will focus its interventions to address the technical and governance perspectives:

(a) The enabling environment: the general framework of national and international policies and strategies, legislation, financing mechanisms, and the dissemination of information for water resources management stakeholders. This framework is both the game board and the rules of the game, and enables all stakeholders to play the appropriate roles in the development and management of the resource;

(b) The institutional functions: these allow effective interaction between various administrative levels and stakeholders. Collaborative mechanisms and forums are needed to facilitate cross-sectoral integration and stakeholder participation so that the integration of environmental water management functions into an overall water resources management framework is strengthened;

(c) Management instruments: these include operational instruments for effective planning, regulation, implementation, monitoring and enforcement. With such instruments, decision-makers will be able to make informed choices between actions. These choices must be based on agreed policies, available resources, environmental impacts and the social and economic consequences.

C. Coordination and cooperation

55. This section proposes the coordination and cooperation mechanisms to be followed at the national, regional, subregional and global levels, consistent with the guidelines provided above. At each level, the avenues for coordination and various partners are identified to ensure a coordinated policy and strategic framework together with a delivery and receipt framework for UNEP interventions and outputs. There are also some common coordination and cooperation mechanisms which UNEP will follow at all levels, including an emphasis on United Nations system-wide cooperation in policy, strategy and implementation and on the need to engage international financial institutions wherever appropriate and possible so as to maximize impact and assist developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

1. National level

56. National Governments, having committed themselves to the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, have primary responsibility for implementing the 2005 integrated water resources management target. That being the case, there must be the political will to ensure coordinated national action, accompanied by the allocation of domestic resources. The United Nations system has also committed itself to assisting countries where national capacities are limited. Effectiveness of action at the national level and the need for national ownership require that national Governments must give ongoing direction to the United Nations system on their needs and the responses to them which they request.

57. As noted in section B above on operational principles, the Bali Strategic Plan provides supplementary guidance for increasing effectiveness at the country level in the areas of technology support and capacity-building. That starting point for improving effectiveness must be the development of a coherent UNEP programme for Governments, to be carried out in cooperation with relevant partners, and clearly based on national priorities and national needs – i.e., demand-driven. On the basis of an identification of those needs, UNEP will work with partners to support national capacity-building to deliver implementation of the water policy and strategy where requested by Governments.

58. Response to Governments' requests for technology support and capacity-building at the national level will be furthered, in cooperation with partners and in particular with other United Nations agencies, for example through the common country assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework system, and will make full use of the UNEP/UNDP memorandum of understanding. The Secretary-General, in his report entitled "In larger freedom: towards security, development and human rights for all"¹⁶ on the occasion of the 2005 World Summit, emphasized that the United Nations as a whole needs a more integrated structure for environmental standard-setting and that regional activities at the country level should benefit from synergies, on both normative and operational aspects, between United Nations agencies, making optimal use of their comparative advantages to realize an integrated approach.¹⁷ Consequently, programme coherence between all United Nations agencies, Government agencies, national institutions and donors working in a particular country is essential. Also, the Bali Strategic Plan and its implementation as outlined by UNEP in document UNEP/GCSS.IX/3/Add.1, should be considered in tandem with the present water policy and strategy.

¹⁶ A/59/2005 and Add.1, Add.2 and Add.3.

¹⁷ Ibid., para. 212. See also annex, subpara. 8 (i).

59. National implementation will also focus on the importance of sustainable water resources management for poverty reduction. That being the case, UNEP will work with others to build national capacity to integrate water resources management into poverty reduction strategies and national development plans. Recognizing also the key role of cities, UNEP will work to integrate water resource management issues into city development strategies. It will also provide normative assistance and support for policy development to both developed and developing countries to promote integrated water resources management for sustainable development worldwide.

2. Regional and subregional levels

60. Coordination of UNEP water-related activities at the regional and subregional levels will be achieved through the UNEP Regional Offices, Regional Seas, out-posted offices and other mechanisms already in place. Consistent with national-level implementation of the water policy and strategy, technology and capacity-building efforts at the regional and subregional levels will also follow the Bali Strategic Plan. UNEP activities will also be consistent with regional and subregional strategies defined by intergovernmental bodies, including basin organizations. UNEP will implement the water policy and strategy through its cooperative frameworks with environmental ministerial forums, such as the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) and the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, regional ministerial forums on water, such as the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW), other forums and processes such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and also through relevant regional multilateral environmental agreements. UNEP will promote the strengthening/formation of regional networks for information exchange, capacity-building, and for catalyzing South-South cooperation. It will also support the formation of networks at the ecoregional level and for catalysing North-South cooperation.

61. As hydrological basins are often crossed by political boundaries, international cooperation may also be necessary. [Transboundary water systems – including river basins with water flowing from one country to another and groundwater resources shared by countries] [Shared water resources, including groundwater, which cross international borders] – may require UNEP intervention, when requested by concerned Governments. The growing competition for and uncoordinated management of such resources can be a threat to social and environmental security, underlining the need for their cooperative management. UNEP will assist regional basin organizations and Governments within a subregion or region, when requested, to build their capacity to assess, manage and coordinate the environmental aspects of shared water resources.

3. Global level

62. As the key agency within the United Nations system responsible for policy guidance and coordination in the field of the environment, UNEP will support system-wide efforts to integrate its relevant activities into a cohesive and complementary programme to maximize United Nations impact whilst at the same time respecting the relative strengths and capacities of the various agencies in the United Nations system.

63. In so doing, UNEP will work closely with UN-Water and the United Nations Environmental Management Group to ensure that ecosystem approaches are fully taken into account in United Nations and intergovernmental policy discussions on water resources. Efforts will be made to encourage the secretariats of relevant multilateral environment agreements to promote integrated water resources management within their mandates.

64. To address specific issues, collaborative arrangements for the implementation of the UNEP Water Programme will be made with specialized programmes and institutions including civil society; the autonomous secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements; UNDP, through its memorandum of understanding with UNEP; the United Nations Development Group (UNDG); the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat); the International Maritime Organization (IMO); the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); the World Conservation Union (IUCN); the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR); the World Bank, in particular within the framework of GEF; the International Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); the World Meteorological Organization (WMO); the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) in global observing systems; and the World Health Organization, WMO and UNESCO within the framework of GEMS Water.

65. UNEP, UN-Habitat and WHO have a particularly important role to play in dealing with the integrated issues of water, sanitation and human settlements in accordance with the decisions adopted by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its twelfth and thirteenth sessions.

66. UNEP will build a clearing-house mechanism through the Bali Strategic Plan which will complement existing mechanisms such as the Global Water Partnership (GWP) Toolbox, UNESCO Water Portal, the United Nations Department of Social Affairs web-based best practices tools, and UNDP Cap-Net. This clearinghouse will promote synergy, the shared learning of experiences, reduce duplication of efforts with other agencies and match delivery to demand.

67. UNEP will forge and strengthen partnerships at the global level with major groups as a means of drawing on the range of available mechanisms and expertise to promote the sustainable management and use of water resources and to identify best-practice responses to environment-related freshwater issues. This will include working through existing international partnerships such as the World Water Council, the Water Alliance, the Dams and Development Project, the Rainwater Partnership and the Global Water Partnership, and will also include forming other relevant partnerships as necessary.

VIII. Operationalizing the strategy in the UNEP programme of work

68. Every two years, UNEP presents its biennial programme of work and budget to the Governing Council at its regular session. The biennial programme of work is drafted by the secretariat and reviewed by the Governments before final debate and adoption by the Council. As with other UNEP policies and strategies, the present document, once adopted, will provide direction to the secretariat in its drafting of the programme of work: expected accomplishments, indicators of achievement and specific activities and outputs. Also, UNEP will endeavour to ensure that UNEP-implemented water projects funded by the Global Environment Facility create maximum synergies and complementarities with the projects and activities carried out under the water policy and strategy.

69. That being the case, the present water policy and strategy will provide direction to the secretariat for the six-year period mentioned in the introduction and in the chapter on monitoring below.

IX. Monitoring the water policy and strategy

70. UNEP will regularly monitor implementation of the water policy and strategy through its internal monitoring procedures. Specifically, UNEP will monitor its compliance with the mandates provided in the policy section, coherence with the strategic principles and key components of the strategy and effective and coherent delivery at the national, regional and global levels. The overall targets and outputs of each of the components of the strategy are described in the annex to the present report and further detailed in the biennial UNEP programme of work, and contain a series of expected accomplishments, activities, outputs and indicators of achievement. As the water policy and strategy will guide the development of the programme of work, and consistent with the principle on building on what already exists, the UNEP and United Nations results-based system for monitoring implementation of the programme of work (i.e., the Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System, IMIDIS) will be utilized to provide overall monitoring of the water policy and strategy; a parallel system will not be developed.

71. Formal implementation reports will be provided to Governments at the regular sessions of the UNEP Governing Council. [Also, every six years through an intergovernmental UNEP water policy and strategy meeting will advise the Governing Council of UNEP on further actions to be taken.] [The Committee of Permanent Representatives will keep the water policy and strategy under review and the secretariat will consult, as appropriate, with those countries not represented on the Committee.] During the six-year term of the present water policy and strategy, should circumstances warrant an earlier review or update, the Governing Council at its regular sessions may be requested to consider unforeseen and emerging issues.

Annex

Intervention logic	Objectively verifiable indicators	Means of verification	Assumptions
Overall goal			
Contribute to environmental sustainability in the management of water resources through integrated ecosystems approaches in order to contribute to the internationally agreed targets and goals relevant to water and socio-economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced environmental stress on water resources and related ecosystems Economic stability and viability is enhanced through recognition of the value of services provided by water-related ecosystems as well as of the value of water resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National, regional and global reports indicate progress towards internationally agreed targets and goals on environmental management of water resources Long-term institutional mechanisms established to maintain balance of water resource use for humans and ecosystem functioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public and political will towards sustainable water-related ecosystems and water resources management Adequate human and financial resources are made available
Component 1: Improved assessment and awareness			
Indicative strategic interventions			
<p>1. Provide knowledge base</p> <p><i>Methodologies and assessments</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification or development of integrated assessment methods on water quality and quantity issues and related ecosystems Assist in the development of integrated assessments at national, regional and global level (not only methods, but actual assessments) Promote the development of environmental profiles <p><i>Capacity-building</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity-building for socio-economic assessments to assess the value of water resources (surface, coastal and groundwater) National and regional capacity-building on the use of assessment methodologies for integrated water resources management planning and monitoring Assist in the development of institutional frameworks to translate assessment results into policy Guidelines for financing ecosystem-based approaches to integrated water resources management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved national monitoring systems for integrated water resources management development and improvement The economic value of ecosystem services related to water resources are given higher priority in national development plans Environmental profiles are used in management schemes The integrated water resources management process and integrated water resources management plans are based on scientific and rational priority setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical and economic assessment methodologies Monitoring programmes Water resources assessments Legal or jurisdictional challenges to integrated water resources management plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequate tools are identified to take the value of ecosystem services related to water resources fully into account Adequate tools are identified to take the value of water resources fully into consideration Adequate data is available on water resources

Intervention logic	Objectively verifiable indicators	Means of verification	Assumptions
<p>2. Raise awareness and inform stakeholders on water resource issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop tailored integrated water assessments (including social and economic information) for specific audiences, including for the development of poverty reduction strategy papers and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks • Promote understanding of the interlinkages between freshwater and coasts • Promote better understanding of groundwater and alternative sources such as rainwater • Information database, including information on clean technologies • Dissemination of information and guidelines on surface- and groundwater quality and the safe reuse of treated wastewater • Identification and dissemination of traditional knowledge and best practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved access to water resource assessment information • Informed stakeholders that are actively engaged in integrated water resources management development processes • Freshwater-coast interlinkages are being addressed in integrated water resources management • Groundwater and alternative sources are addressed in integrated water resources management processes and plans • Poverty reduction strategy papers and common country assessments/United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks include environmental water resource concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Records of integrated water resources management plan development • National/Regional assessment reports • GEO publications on water resources • World Water Development Report • Other Global assessment reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders interested in water resources management as a means to alleviate poverty
<p>3. Provide information on threats, trends and emerging issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In cooperation with others, collect and disseminate information on threats, trends and emerging issues such as climate variability, urbanization, desertification, deforestation, etc. • Development of scenarios on impacts of threats to water resources to ensure that integrated water resources management considers contingencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated water resources management processes and plans take fully into account natural disasters (such as hurricanes, droughts and floods), climate change and adaptation to it, and threats from related ecosystems • Preparedness for, response to and mitigation of natural disasters take into consideration the value of the services of water-related ecosystems to protect water resources and humans • Alternative scenarios, development of such scenarios and assessment of their impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated water resources management plans • Media reports of disaster response indicate environmental planning and response • National and regional assessment reports • GEO publications on water resources • World Water Development Report • Other global assessment reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural disasters and other threats and their impacts are well known to decision-makers and other stakeholders • The importance of the role of water-related ecosystems in preventing or mitigating such disasters is known by all stakeholders

Intervention logic	Objectively verifiable indicators	Means of verification	Assumptions
Component 2: Improved environmental management of freshwater systems			
Indicative strategic interventions			
<p>1. Create enabling environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy development to incorporate water resource management into poverty reduction strategy papers and national development plans • Provide guidance and technical and legal support to Governments, including on the relevance of freshwater-coast interlinkages • Promote integration of GEF-supported international water projects into national sustainable development planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National, subregional and regional stakeholders have the necessary legal and regulatory tools to develop solid, implementable and defensible integrated water resources management • Integrated water resources management takes full account not only of the economic value of water resources but also of the economic value of services provided by water-related ecosystems, and includes proactive components to address poverty reduction • Informed stakeholders bring valuable contributions to ensure that integrated water resources management takes into consideration competing uses for the overall benefit of society, particularly the poor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National, subregional and regional laws and regulations • Poverty reduction strategy papers and other national development strategies • Integrated water resources management plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty reduction strategy papers and other national development plans are appropriately reviewed and revised • Governmental support is given to new legal, regulatory and institutional arrangements • Stakeholders engaged in dialogues are able to reach agreement
<p>2. Institutional functions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen national institutions and reforms and regional cooperative mechanisms. • Facilitation of inter-institutional dialogue meetings at the local, national and regional levels • Facilitate contributions to integrated water resources management by all stakeholders • Assist interested and concerned Governments in establishing dialogue mechanisms to enable stakeholders to interact, including on dams and development and on the freshwater-coast interface 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional mandates and work plans are reformed to accommodate the environmental aspects of water resource management • Dialogue meetings are held and recommendations incorporated into water resources management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parliamentary, institutional and other reports 	<p>Relevant governmental institutions are identified and open to cooperation at all levels</p>

Intervention logic	Objectively verifiable indicators	Means of verification	Assumptions
<p>3. Management instruments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and promote development and transfer of low-cost technologies, including alternative water supplies such as desalinization, wastewater reuse, pollution prevention and rainwater harvesting, and water efficiency • Pilot projects to advance new and innovative technologies • Operational instruments to support protection and rehabilitation of basins and their ecosystems • Development of prevention and preparedness guidelines, together with risk mitigation and disaster reduction, including early-warning systems • Guidelines for taking account of interconnected ecosystems, including freshwater-coast interlinkages • Guidelines and capacity-building for monitoring compliance and enforcement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and strengthening of practical guidance on the cross-sectoral integration of relevant institutions within the context of national and sectoral development plans and goal. • Development of integrated water resources management and water efficiency planning at the national, subregional and regional levels • Increased cooperation and networking between institutions across relevant sectors (including freshwater and coastal sectors) at the national, subregional, regional and global levels • Impacted basins are restored • Alternative water resources are documented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of technologies • National and regional pollution abatement reports • Established facilities for alternative water resources • Basin assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic sector addresses water resources questions with open mind • Cultural and social norms do not interfere with alternative sources • Means of information dissemination are appropriate
Component 3: Coordination and cooperation			
Indicative strategic interventions			
1. National level			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catalyse and facilitate capacity at national level within the framework of the Bali Strategic Plan (through workshops and guidelines) for assessment and management • Technical workshops and guidance that improves knowledge and access to innovative and appropriate technologies • Promote integration of UNEP-supported water activities at the national level with those of other actors such as the United Nations, GEF, bilateral donors and development banks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National-level implementers in the water sector (relevant stakeholders) are equipped with the necessary programmatic and technical tools • Coherent delivery of United Nations support at the national level in the context of UNDG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNEP reports on Bali Strategic Plan implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation with United Nations Country Teams and implementation of UNEP-UNDP memorandum of understanding are successful

Intervention logic	Objectively verifiable indicators	Means of verification	Assumptions
<p>2. Regional and subregional levels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to regional networks (e.g., AMCOW, CAMRE) in their efforts to promote integrated water resources management • Provide institutional and technical capacity-building for the management of shared basins and aquifers where requested, including the freshwater-coast interface 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regions and subregions incorporate components of UNEP water policy and strategy into their integrated water resources management plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional and subregional work plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministerial cooperative frameworks are funded • Governments affected by transboundary water resources issues are open to cooperation
<p>2. Global level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support for environmental water resource management as a contribution to UN-Water, the United Nations International Decade for Action, “Water for Life”, 2005–2015, the Global Water Partnership and other relevant global organizations and actively participate in promoting ecosystems-based approaches to water resources management • Consistent with the Bali Strategic Plan, develop a database and clearing-house mechanism of relevant UNEP activities worldwide in the field of capacity-building • Support the secretariats of global multilateral environmental agreements to promote the values and components of the UNEP water policy and strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-coordinated global actions to avoid duplication and maximize complementarity of activities • Multilateral environmental agreements are well equipped to deliver a water programme tailored to their specific needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global reports which reflect progress towards water resources goals and targets • Reports and work plans of multilateral environmental agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multilateral environmental agreement secretariats and conferences of parties are interested in collaboration