

Distr. GENERAL

UNEP/GC.24/8
19 October 2006

ENGLISH ONLY

**Twenty-fourth session of the Governing Council/
Global Ministerial Environment Forum**

Nairobi, 5-9 February 2007

Item 4 (d) and 6 of the provisional agenda*

**Progress report on the implementation
of GC decision 23/11 on gender equality in the field of the environment
Report by the Executive Director**

Summary

The Progress Report responds to the mandate given to the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to integrate further gender equality and environment activities into the programme of work of the United Nations Environment Programme.

The Report provides a summary of progress made so far in the efforts undertaken by the United Nations Environment Programme to address the issues of equal participation in decision-making, gender mainstreaming in environmental policies and programmes, the assessment of effects on women of environmental policies, as well as the implementation aspects, as stipulated in the GC decision 23/11 on gender equality in the field of environment.

A comprehensive gender mainstreaming Plan of Action was adopted to ensure the full implementation of GC decision 23/11.

* UNEP/GC.24/1.

Overall comments to be incorporated below in text:

- The report should start by putting UNEP's recent efforts into a broader context, i.e., UNEP began to focus on including gender at the WAVE conference, the WAVE outcome document, the Women and Environment book, the GEO yearbook, etc.
- The report spends significant time reiterating gender mandates, and it would be helpful to focus more on actions UNEP has taken to implement those mandates
- UNEP's partnerships with key actors, i.e. IUCN and WEDO, have been very successful, and that should be reflected in this document. These partnerships demonstrate UNEP's commitment not only to internal (organizational) change but also to external change. Furthermore, these partnerships are a tangible sign of UNEP's commitment to increase its internal capacity, as the partners have been helpful in that regard
- It would be helpful to frame UNEP's current efforts to include gender in a more positive light and to talk about the entrance of a new UNEP ED as a new era
- UNEP should consider including in this report a list of suggestions, recommendations for action, funding needs or requests FROM governments for capacity building that would enable it to take the next steps in fully implementing GC 23/11

Introduction

[Background on WAVE conference here]

At its twenty-third session, the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum of the United Nations Environment Programme adopted GC decision 23/11 on gender equality in the field of the environment. A comprehensive implementation plan, the UNEP Gender Plan of Action, was formulated. It contains clear guidelines and timelines for the practical and effective inclusion of gender perspectives in environmental policies and programmes; measures to foster the full and strong commitment of the Senior Management Group of UNEP to gender mainstreaming, including resource mobilization and human resources management; activities and methodologies to strengthen capacities and accountability systems for all staff. A series of workshops will be held in the coming weeks, including in Regional Offices, to build the capacity of staff to undertake gender analysis and apply methodologies to both policy and programmatic work.

In accordance with the request of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, the United Nations Environment Programme communicated GC decision 23/11 on gender equality in the field of the environment to the Commission on the Status of Women. The decision was included in the official documents of the Commission on the Status of Women. UNEP was represented at the Fiftieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which held discussions on the equal participation of men and women in decision-making. Parity democracy in environmental decision-making is still an exception, although the world community recognizes that "women should be engaged in decision-making in every area, with equal strength and equal numbers"¹. UNEP will also report to the Commission on the Status of Women on the situation with regard to gender equality and the environment and progress in the implementation of the present decision after the UNEP Governing Council's twenty-fourth session.

¹ Excerpt from a statement by Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, on the occasion of the International Women's Day on 8 March 2006.

Legislative mandates

The global policy context provides a number of legislative mandates to the United Nations Environment Programme to address gender equality in the field of the environment. These mandates were spelled out in GC decision 23/11 on gender equality in the field of the environment as follows:

- Principle 20 of the Rio Declaration (Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992);
- Paragraph 20 of the United Nations Millennium Declaration (General Assembly Resolution 55/2 of September 2000) and goals 3 and 7 of the internationally agreed goals of the Millennium Declaration
- Paragraph 20 of the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development (Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg South Africa, 26 August – 4 September 2002).

Mandates also stem from the following UNEP policy tools:

- the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building, which requests UNEP to integrate specific gender-mainstreaming strategies, as well as education and training for women, in formulating relevant policies, and to promote the participation of women in environmental decision-making;
- the successive Governing Council decisions 17/4 of 21 May 1993, 18/6 of 26 May 1995, 19/7 of 7 February 1997 and 20/9 of 5 February 1999 on the role of women in environment and development.

In addition, since the adoption of GC decision 23/11 on gender equality in the field of the environment, the Secretary-General of the United Nations issued a report on the 10th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action in which he indicated that attitudes and real progress, in every aspect of gender equality and women's empowerment, have lagged behind policy.

Later that year, in adopting the 2005 World Summit Outcome document, world leaders reaffirmed their commitment to fully and effectively implement the goals and objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and recognized the importance of gender mainstreaming as a tool for achieving gender equality.

In his letter of 16 January 2006 to all heads of United Nations entities, the Secretary-General outlined general requirements for the development of a United Nations system-wide policy and strategy on gender mainstreaming. In developing the policy and strategy, the High Level Committee of the United Nations system Chief Executive's Board for Coordination was asked to work in cooperation with the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality. UNEP is closely associated to this conceptual work.

Equal participation in decision-making

Governmental Survey

In order to obtain a clear picture of the current status of gender and environment governmental practices and to collect examples of governmental methods of work conducive to women's participation in environmental decision-making, UNEP partnered with WEDO to develop and circulate a questionnaire to the Committee of Permanent Representatives, Missions in Geneva and ministries responsible for the environment worldwide. The goal of the questionnaire is to share good examples of gender-sensitive environmental initiatives of Governments and all stakeholders with each other. The questionnaire covered policy and organizational issues, and explored other pertinent gender-mainstreaming elements such as resource allocation, training and capacity-building, gender impact assessment in national environmental policies and programmes, as well as the use of gender-specific indicators in environmental sectors. The questionnaire also contained, under its section "Enhancement of women's leadership in environment", a query on success stories on women's participation in decision-making in the field of natural resources and the environment, inviting governments to share good examples of their gender-sensitive environmental initiatives.

To-date, UNEP received responses from the following countries: Canada, Colombia, Republic of the Congo, Czech Republic, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Guatemala, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Luxemburg, Mali, Mexico, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Philippines, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, and Viet Nam. Once sufficient number of responses are received, a survey analysis will be conducted and the results will be widely disseminated. UNEP expects that the analysis will be utilized to develop a concrete plan for ongoing engagement and technical support to countries, to assist them in building their capacity to enhance women's participation in environmental decision-making.

Young Women's Mentorship Program

One of GC 23/11's directives is to develop mechanisms for encourage young women to take an active role in environmental policy formulation and decision-making. UNEP, in collaboration with the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), undertook a broad-based, global consultation process with 55 individuals, civil society and youth entities, particularly focused on the global South, to develop a mentorship project to meet this goal. The proposal, entitled "Wings on Waves: A Mentorship Programme to Build Young Women's Environmental Leadership", aims at creating a cadre of young environmentalists who will take on leadership roles in policy and programme development in the coming decades. The implementation of the proposal will depend on the availability of additional extra-budgetary funding. The Division of Communications and Public Information, which coordinates the Tunza Youth programme, will be actively involved in the mentorship programme. The project will also establish close links with relevant UNEP programmatic areas. Once funded, the pilot project would run during two cycles of 16 months each and would include activities to enhance the leadership in environment and sustainable development of 48 young women from around the world, including through field visits, a summer school and mentoring via the internet, the launch of 48 local leadership initiatives on environment and sustainable development from a gender perspective, and the establishment of an active worldwide network of young women leaders working on environmental and sustainable development issues.

Gender-disaggregated Data

At the United Nations Third World Conference on Women, held in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1985, governments agreed to develop and/or reorganize their national information systems to compile and disseminate statistics on women and men to better address gender issues. Two decades later, the lack of reliable national statistics on gender issues persists in many parts of the world. The United Nations Environment Programme is in the process to address this issue and plans will be formulated for the collection of gender-disaggregated data.

UNEP, with support from governments and the United Nations Statistics Division, will make strides in this regard in the course of the next biennium, and develop and disseminate gender-disaggregated analysis, data and information, on UNEP issues and activities, including at the regional level.

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs (Statistics Division) addressed the limited progress in gender statistics in a report entitled "The World's Women 2005: Progress in Statistics". This report recommends that the following actions be taken:

- strengthen national statistical systems;
- mainstream gender in all aspects of production of statistics;

- develop and improve concepts and methods, where inadequate.

A basic weakness of the dominant literature is its tendency to combine all environmental problems into the same undifferentiated category, without attempting to differentiate serious and generalised problems from minor and localised ones, or short-term issues from long-term threats. This failure makes it exceedingly

difficult to gauge the significance or the real contribution of different factors and particularly social actors to environmental degradation, or to the improvement of environmental conditions.²

Gender balance in Policy Dialogues

All UNEP divisions, as well as regional and out-posted offices, have made considerable efforts to further strengthen the involvement of women in their activities and to ensure gender balance in participation in capacity-building and training courses, in policy dialogue and in legal capacity-building initiatives. The Environmental Law Branch, for example, has undertaken training specially designed for women and women's groups on development and enforcement of environmental law. Through these activities, in strengthening the legal expertise of women, the Environmental Law Branch contributed to assist governments in promoting the equal participation of women and men in legal and policy formulation, as well as in implementation activities.

The need to reach parity in representation at the Global Civil Society Forum has been explicitly underlined in invitation letters for the regional consultations meetings and for the global yearly event. Toward this end, UNEP has committed to gender balance in the chairs of working groups at these meetings (i.e. each working group has two co-chairs, ideally reflecting UNEP's interest in gender balance). UNEP award schemes such as the Champions of the Earth award take gender balance into consideration. For example, in 2006, xxxxx COE winners were women or organizations led by women. A directory of women environmentalists was successfully developed on UNEP's web site to publicly recognize their role in sound environmental management and regeneration (http://www.unep.org/women_env).

Gender mainstreaming in environmental policies and programmes

The Programme Coordination and Management Unit led UNEP's efforts to improve gender sensitivity in project cycle management. The revised the project manual issued in 2005, includes improved approach towards gender in project management. The gender sections in the main text and the annex provide practical guidance and steps for developing and implementing UNEP projects in a gender sensitive manner. UNEP also conducted 18 project management training sessions from April to June 2006. A total of about 300 UNEP staff members from the Headquarters and offices-away-from Headquarters participated in the training. The subjects for the one-day training included gender sensitivity and poverty alleviation among other project management-related subjects. Although brief, this was the first attempt to increase sensitivity to the benefits and necessity of considering a gender perspective throughout the project cycle management. Currently, all UNEP proposals are required to indicate how project managers will handle gender issues in their projects. On-going efforts are being made to strengthen gender perspective in project design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. For example, the Division of Global Environmental Facility Coordination undertook a number of initiatives aimed at mainstreaming gender in their activities, such as analysing gender mainstreaming in the land degradation focal area and developing a checklist on how to mainstream gender throughout the project cycle and through regular reporting.

[Here, there should be a paragraph about the partnership between UNEP, IUCN, and WEDO to radically improve UNEP's gender inclusion policies, practices, etc.]

In June 2006, UNEP held a Senior Management Group Workshop on gender mainstreaming, which considered and adopted a Gender Plan of Action. This framework document, developed in collaboration with the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and WEDO, stipulates that all relevant UNEP's environmental policies, programmes and initiatives should be gender-sensitive and employ a conceptual framework that incorporates gender equality and equity. The gender-environment linkage, identified through methodologies, such as gender analysis and gender mainstreaming, reveals women's and men's distinct needs and roles in relation to

². George Martine, **Gender and Sustainability: Re-assessing the Linkages and Issues**, (Sustainability and Development, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, December 1997), <http://www.fao.org/sd/wpdirect/WPan0020.htm>

the environment. The Plan of Action calls for high-level and sustained commitment to internal capacity-building on gender mainstreaming, utilizing various strategies including organizational workshops and training, changes in policy and practice, and accountability for implementation, as well as resource mobilization and human resources management. It determined that four interactive spheres, i.e., policy, organizational, delivery and constituency, would permit the meaningful integration of gender mainstreaming strategies into its Programme of Work.

The Plan of Action contains objectives, action steps, a timeline and indicators of success. A step-by-step strategic approach was developed to adopt a UNEP gender policy, allocate sufficient resources, ensure that all UNEP policies are gender sensitive, establish a group of UNEP gender focal points, build the capacity of UNEP staff system-wide, through formal gender mainstreaming training, to include a gender component in their programmes and activities, and weave gender criteria in project elaboration and review. This landmark process was made possible thanks to an earmarked contribution from the government of Sweden.

Out of the Senior Management Workshop and discussions around the draft POA came the decision that a new position of Senior Gender Advisor was critical to increasing UNEP's internal capacity and external partnerships. Consequently, UNEP's ED established the position of SGA to work, inter alia, with senior management and staff to address issues of equity and opportunity in a deliberate and explicit manner. UNEP is drafting the position announcement, will post the announcements, and expects to have an SGA in place by xxx date. This SGA will be a part of the ED's office and will report directly to the ED, reflecting the high priority the organization places on including gender throughout the organization.

The "Web of institutionalisation" concept was applied in the post-conflict assessment work of UNEP. As a result the assessment methods currently being developed by the Post-Conflict Branch for the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) will be mainstreamed. [What does this mean? It makes sense to de-link the "web of institutionalisation" concept from the post-conflict branch assessment methods—these are not related.] Also gender training is part of the preparatory activities before missions are undertaken. The guide for decision-makers and practitioners entitled "Environmental Considerations of Human Displacement in Liberia" was reviewed from a gender perspective. In Afghanistan, where the gender balance of the UNEP international team is close to 50 per cent, all international and national staff have received gender training and all publications are screened from a gender perspective. The on-going assessment of the situation in Sudan has begun consultations with relevant women's groups and non-governmental organizations during the collection of field data to ensure the inclusion of gender dimensions. Prior to the post-conflict assessment of environmental damage in Lebanon, the UNEP international team of multi-disciplinary experts received gender training to mainstream gender issues within the collection of field data.

An account of lessons learned about the gender-related aspects of environmental issues in conflict situations will be given, on the basis of the above activities, at a later stage.

[The Gender/Conflict proposal WEDO developed on behalf of UNEP should be described here, and funds should be requested for its implementation.]

UNEP contributes on a regular basis to the system-wide Action Plan for the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, and keeps the office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women informed of new developments in its efforts to contribute to gender mainstreaming in all post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation programmes. [How does UNEP do this? By issuing periodic reports? More details here would be helpful].

Assessment of effects on women of environmental policies

In August 2006, a task team was established to review modalities of implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan on Technology Support and Capacity-building. The implementation of these findings will greatly transform UNEP's approach to service delivery, as UNEP reinvigorates its partnership with UNDP and others. As per the Bali Strategic Plan on Technology Support and Capacity-building and the work of the task team,

gender mainstreaming will feature prominently in these activities including through assisting governments in building capacity for gender mainstreaming. Accordingly, the 2008-2009 Programme of Work has been adapted to respond to novel needs and build mechanisms to adjust programmatic approaches. The entire UNEP staff will be actively engaged in this endeavour, which will require among others additional cultural change within the organization.

Pivotal to a better understanding of gender and environment interlinkages and synergies, are research and exchange programmes with scientific institutions in the context of the Decade for Education and Sustainable Development. The Environmental Education and Training Unit deployed efforts to streamline gender issues in the conception, planning and implementation of its activities. In addition to developing gender-sensitive publications and toolkits, and to enhance the involvement of women in their workshops and training courses, the Environmental Education and Training Unit released materials to promote equality between men and women in their behavioural patterns in relation to the environment. (www.unep.org/training).

A project proposal was developed to improve environmental management and expand gender equity and women's rights through collaboration with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and other relevant human rights bodies. This proposal seeks to use the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, a legally binding treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979, to increase the recognition of the gender-related aspects of environmental issues from a human rights perspective. [Is UNEP planning to undertake this work, and if so, internally or with external partners? What is the request of governments in order to make this happen—should be specified here.]

Conclusion

UNEP is dedicated to intensifying its efforts and undertaking further multi-faceted activities to ensure the full implementation of GC decision 23/11 on gender equality in the field of the environment, given the strengthened commitment on the part of senior management and staff, as well as enhanced coherence and collaboration with United Nations entities within the framework of the United Nations reform process. Accountability, result-based management, capacity-building, and specific interventions aimed at women's empowerment will contribute to the operationalization of the UNEP Gender Plan of Action. Although challenges remain, UNEP is now positioned to address gender as an issue that goes to the core of its identity. UNEP has already secured both common understanding and ownership among its management and staff in order to embark on the path of institutional and cultural evolution, including in its programmatic and substantive activities. This approach will bring about accountability and gender sensitivity in the articulation of all UNEP policies and in the formulation and implementation of UNEP projects and programmes – opening avenues for better communication, integration and collaboration between UNEP staff members and UNEP partners. The cost of not focusing on gender issues would be enormously high and would diminish, apart from the culture of cooperation, productivity and economic benefits for all. UNEP recognizes that progress for women is progress for all and that women's empowerment is an effective tool to combat poverty, hunger and environmental degradation.