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Committee of Permanent Representatives to
the United Nations Environment Programme
Joint Subcommittees I and II
Nairobi, 4 February 2008

REVISED DRAFT DECISION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARCTIC REGION

The secretariat of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) submits the revised draft decision on sustainable development of the Arctic Region, as prepared by the informal group, established by the meeting of Joint Subcommittees I and II, held on 31 January 2008.

The document is being circulated in support of the consideration by Joint Subcommittees I and II, at its meeting to be held on 4 February 2008.

Sustainable Development of the Arctic Region

The Governing Council,

Recalling UNEP Governing Council decision 22/11 (Sustainable development of the Arctic) of 7 February 2003;

Deeply concerned that, despite the many successful and continuing efforts of the international community since the Stockholm Conference, and some progress having been achieved, the environment and the natural resource base that supports life on Earth continue to deteriorate at an alarming rate as shown in UNEP's 4th Global Environment Outlook report, with specific concerns highlighted in relation to melting Arctic sea ice (GEO4 Summary for Decision Makers: Polar, p. 19);

Recalling that "Melting Ice – A Hot Topic?" was the theme for the 2007 World Environment Day, focusing on the effects of climate change on polar ecosystems and communities, ensuing consequences around the world, and actions that can be taken to avoid abrupt, accelerating, or potentially irreversible environmental changes;

Extremely concerned over the impact of climate change on the polar regions, especially the Arctic which is experiencing some of the most extreme and fast moving change evidenced anywhere, with increasingly dramatic effects on Arctic peoples and biodiversity, as well as significant global consequences, e.g., through contributions from glaciers and the Greenland Ice Sheet to sea level rise;

Convinced of the need to protect the Arctic coastal and marine environment and to ensure environmental security for its indigenous and other peoples, as well as for its biodiversity;

Well aware of the globally strong influence of Arctic sea ice dynamics on the planetary climate system and ocean circulation;

Also well aware of the need for and importance of cooperative measures to promote adaptation of Arctic coastal and marine ecosystems to climate change, and for adaptive management of these ecosystems in the face of rapid climate change;

Emphasizing that the International Polar Year 2007-2009 (IPY), which involves thousands of scientists from over 60 countries working at both poles, provides a foundation to enhance the scientific basis for informed decision-making;

Acknowledging the deep concern over the vulnerability of the environment and fragile ecosystems of the Arctic Ocean and Arctic sea ice, and the need for States to strengthen scientific cooperation, as noted in the preambular paragraphs of the UN General Assembly

omnibus resolution on the Ocean and the Law of the Sea adopted by the UN General Assembly in December, 2007;

Emphasizing that the exploitation of Arctic resources should be done in a sustainable manner;

Believing that, the Arctic coastal and marine environment, its peoples and biodiversity would benefit from the efforts of Arctic rim States, as well as other interested States and stakeholders, in ensuring its protection and management regarding commercial activities including shipping, fishing, oil, gas and mining operations in recently opened ice melt areas of the Arctic coastal and marine environment,

1. *Encourages* UNEP to actively co-operate with Multilateral Environmental Agreements, the Arctic Council and other relevant regional and international players to increase the knowledge of the decision makers at UN-level on the environmental security of the Arctic coastal and marine environment and its people.
2. *Urges* Governments of Arctic States and other interested stakeholders to ensure full implementation of the Precautionary Approach in conjunction with Environmental Impact Assessments, in making decisions affecting the Arctic coastal and marine environment, and correspondingly its Arctic peoples and biodiversity;
3. *Requests* Governments, together with the International Council for Science (ICSU) and WMO, the sponsoring agencies of the International Polar Year (IPY), and other relevant regional and international players including Multilateral Environmental Agreements, UNEP and the Arctic Council, to enhance the scientific basis for informed decision-making through the promotion of international scientific collaboration and coordination to better track, understand, and predict Arctic change as a key IPY legacy activity;
4. *Also requests* Governments of Arctic States and other interested stakeholders, to individually and collectively expedite the implementation of the established measures for adaptation to climate change as part of on-going cooperation in the region.