



**United Nations  
Environment  
Programme**

Distr.: General  
2 March 2004

English only



**The United Nations Environment Programme  
Consultative Seminar on Gender and Environment**  
First meeting  
Nairobi, 25 and 26 February 2004

**Report of the United Nations Environment Programme Consultative  
Seminar on Gender and Environment**

**Introduction**

1. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) women's consultative seminar on gender and environment was convened by the Division of Policy Development and Law of UNEP, with a view to tackling some of the outstanding and anticipated substantive and strategic challenges in the area of gender and environment. The seminar was held at UNEP headquarters, Nairobi, on 25 and 26 February 2004.
2. The discussions and recommendations from each of the six working groups set up under the seminar would feed into the planning of the UNEP Woman's Global Environmental Assembly in 2004 and into the continuous work conducted by UNEP on environment and gender mainstreaming.

**I. Opening of the meeting**

3. The seminar was opened at 9.45 a.m. on Wednesday, 25 February 2004, by Mr. Klaus Töpfer, the Executive Director of UNEP. It was attended by representatives of the following governmental organizations: Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (Germany), Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Wildlife (Kenya), Permanent Mission to UNEP of the Kingdom of the Netherlands; representatives of the following non-governmental organizations: Africa Centre for Gender Empowerment (Kenya), African Development Bank (Côte d'Ivoire), African Women's Economic Policy Network, Centre for International Sustainable Development Law (Canada), East African Natural History Society, Emirates Environmental Group, Green Belt Movement (Kenya), GROOTS (Kenya), Heinrich Böll Foundation, Indigenous People's Network (Kenya), International Council for Women, International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), Mama-86 (Ukraine), Mazingira Institute (Kenya), Women Against Tobacco (Spain), Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF), Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), Women's Land, Water, Rights in Southern Africa, World Watch Institute (United States of

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America); representatives of the following youth organizations: Instituto para la Protección del Medio Ambiente (Peru), UNEP Youth Advisory Council (Bangladesh), UNEP Youth Advisory Council (Zambia); representatives of the secretariats of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), UNEP and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT); and a number of observers.

## A. Opening remarks

4. In his opening remarks, Mr. Töpfer welcomed all the participants, and extended a special welcome to Ms. Wangari Maathai, the Assistant Minister of Environment, Natural Resources and Wildlife of Kenya. He noted that the outcome of the meeting, a gender and environment consultative seminar, convened by UNEP, would be useful, since the gender mainstreaming in UNEP was not yet complete, and constructive critical observations, especially those to do with targets yet to be reached, would be very welcome. Gender was not a unilateral issue, but had links with every aspect of the UNEP work programme, and the thinking and cooperation of women needed to be integrated into all of that programme. He recalled the words of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, in 2003, that the obligation of the United Nations to prevent conflicts had not met with success, and his hope for a return to a peaceful world in future years. Since sustainable development was the peace policy of our times, because the huge differential between rich and poor could not be bridged without it, the input and integration of the thinking of women into the struggle for sustainable development was essential, if we were to have a balanced situation and peace in the world. He therefore wished the participants every success in their deliberations, and said he was looking forward to seeing the outcome of those deliberations.

5. In her opening remarks, Ms. Wangari Maathai recognized the support afforded to herself and the Green Belt Movement, since its inception, by UNEP. She welcomed the continuing partnership between UNEP and the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO). She told participants that gender related to equity, justice and fairness and talked about the vital importance of culture in relation to the environment and sustainable development. In countries that had been colonized, culture was the first victim because it defined people and empowered them, giving them identity and self respect. She emphasized the importance of empowering people by reviving the positive aspects of their culture.

6. She spoke of the importance of finding ways to communicate with people at the grassroots level, noting that, in countries such as Kenya where Christianity was very popular, the Bible could prove useful in highlighting environmental issues. She referred to a list of elements of culture including language; names; symbols; agriculture; rituals and ceremonies; all of which illustrated how the whole life experience of human beings revolved around their interaction with the environment.

7. The acting chair of the seminar, Ms. Beverly Miller, Gender Focal Point of UNEP, thanked Ms. Wangari Maathai and the Executive Director for their encouraging and challenging statements. Echoing Ms. Maathai's highlighting of the role of culture in development, she recalled that she herself had referred to women as "culture-bearers" in a speech made in Nairobi in 1985 at the United Nations Third World Conference on Women. She noted that the work of women in the environmental movement had greatly stimulated the work of UNEP, and that gender equity had become a strategic objective at the global, regional and local levels. The gender mainstreaming policy adopted by UNEP in 2000 had mapped out the critical role of women in social development as one of the pillars of sustainable development. The current meeting would provide input for both the eighth special session of the United Nations Environment Programme Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, to be held in Jeju, South Korea, in March 2004, and the planned UNEP Women's Global Environmental Assembly to be held later in 2004. She wished the participants much success in their work at the seminar.

8. The representative of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, Ms. Aseghedech Ghirmazion, informed participants that the winner of the Petra Kelly award for 2004 was Ms. Wangari Maathai.

9. Ms. June Zeitlin, Executive Director of WEDO, reflected on the work of the organization over the last 10 years, pushing forward seminal issues for women's groups since 1991, linking issues related to environment, peace, human rights and gender equality. There had been recognition for the first time at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 that women were key agents for change and this had been carried forward to other world conferences, including the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. The Millennium Development Goals provided an opportunity to translate commitments into real change in women's lives through action and political will.

10. She welcomed the new strategic partnership between UNEP, WEDO and women around the world, noting that WEDO worked with grassroots organizations worldwide, including many of those represented at the present meeting. The Global Review - Beijing +10 in March 2005, would provide an opportunity to question why the majority of the world's poorest people were still women, why the gender dimension was still not adequately reflected in issues such as poverty eradication, access to safe water and sanitation. There had been a great deal of research and documentation but gender equality and empowerment of women had yet to be achieved.

11. Ms. Meryem Amar, Programme Officer, Civil Society Unit, (DPDL) UNEP, presented a review of UNEP work in mainstreaming gender. She noted the history of women's participation in the United Nations, including that of the International Council of Women, in the drafting of the preamble of the United Nations Charter and the key role played by WEDO in lobbying Governments to include women in Agenda 21, which called for global action for women towards sustainable and equitable development. UNEP had adopted several decisions on the role of women and development that had endorsed plans of action for full and beneficial integration of women in all areas of environment and development.

12. UNEP had adopted its gender mainstreaming policy in 2000 to improve the governing and managerial processes of UNEP, promoting gender equality in sustainable development, refocusing institutional arrangements to create a working environment sensitive to gender differences. In 2001, the Executive Director had emphasized the importance of civil society, including women's organizations, playing a role in effective international environmental governance. The UNEP Division of Policy Development and Law had decided to revitalize gender activities through workshops in Africa on the relationship between biodiversity, women and poverty reduction. The policy series publication on women and the environment, in cooperation with WEDO, includes guidelines on mainstreaming gender perspectives in water management, combating desertification and preserving biodiversity. Gaps remained between policy and practice and the 2004 report of the Commission on the Status of Women had made important recommendations in that regard.

## **B. Organization of work**

13. Following the opening of the seminar, Ms. Beverly Miller passed the chair to Ms. Irene Dankelman, the Senior Adviser for Sustainable Development and member of the WEDO board. The new Chair explained that the plenary would break into the following six working groups:

(a) Working group I on the topic "Women, poverty and the environment", to be facilitated by Mr. Davinder Lamba, Director, Mazingira Institute;

(b) Working group II on the topic "Beijing + 10 and the millennium development goals, to be facilitated by Ms. June Zeitlin, Director of WEDO;

(c) Working group III on the topic "Establishment of a mentoring programme, women and youth", to be facilitated by Mr. Troy Govender, Chairperson, Sustainability United and Specialist (External) Adviser to UNEP's Children, Youth, Sport and Environment Unit;

(d) Working group IV on the topic "Ways in which UNEP can better incorporate gender in its work." To be facilitated by Ms. Marie-Claire Cordonnier Segger, Director, Centre for International Sustainable Development Law;

(e) Working group V on the topic "Biodiversity, water, and indigenous knowledge at the core of sustainable and equitable development", to be facilitated by Ms. Lucy Mullenkei, Executive Director, Indigenous Information Network, and Chair, African Indigenous Women's Organization;

(f) Working group VI on the topic “Planning the UNEP Women’s Global Environmental Assembly”, to be facilitated by Ms. Meryem Amar, Programme Officer, UNEP.

14. The Chair said that each working group would report back its recommendations to the plenary session on the following afternoon.

## II. Presentation and discussion

15. Ms. Jutta Emig, Head of the Civil Society Unit in the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, gave a presentation on gender mainstreaming and good governance. She gave an overview of the process within the ministry that had started in May 2000 with the establishment of a gender mainstreaming interministerial working group. This had been followed by the amendment of the common ministerial rules of procedure in July 2000 that aimed to ensure gender equality was made a consistent guiding principle that federal ministries should apply in all political standards-setting and administrative measures. A pilot project on radiation protection had served for the development of a gender impact assessment procedure which involved all the ministry departments as well as subordinate offices in the decision-making procedure. The gender mainstreaming project team consisted of representatives from all of the ministry’s departments, subordinate offices, the office for human resources and the office for organizational affairs. The functions of the team included the ongoing shaping of the gender mainstreaming process within the ministry; focus on specific subjects in working groups; support and assessment of the ministry’s research and development project on gender mainstreaming; multiplier functions within the various ministry departments and advising on gender mainstreaming.

16. An alliance of objectives aimed to impact positively both gender equality policy and environmental policy. The process of developing a gender impact assessment procedure had had a considerable impact on overall gender mainstreaming within the German Government. She noted that the process must define clear goals, establish responsibility for assessments and provide necessary support to all units. Her experience had convinced her that establishing a central gender mainstreaming unit would risk “ghetto-ization” of the subject and that existing structures should be used so that each staff member routinely took gender aspects into consideration.

17. Mr. Steve Lonergan, the director of the UNEP Division of Early Warning and Assessment outlined a report to be finalized by March 2004 focusing on efforts towards gender mainstreaming within the division, with a number of recommendations for gender mainstreaming in UNEP. The report included a review of literature on gender and environment, with particular focus on gender mainstreaming in institutional settings, as well as a series of interviews with key informants, including from other United Nations agencies, on their efforts towards gender mainstreaming. The report examined how assessments were approached and how better to incorporate gender into assessment. It also looked at gender mainstreaming in the Divisions products including the Global Environment Outlook reports and the Africa Environment Outlook reports, and the culture, and institutional and organizational structure of the division. He said that it was clear that gender mainstreaming was yet to be adequately incorporated in both the DEWA and in wider UNEP activities.

18. Several participants suggested that there was a need to establish gender mainstreaming units within institutions to promote gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

19. In response to a question on gender mainstreaming at the institutional level, Ms. Emig replied that in her experience, general gender mainstreaming training had proved unsuccessful, whereas she had seen a favourable response to training that was very specific to the work of each unit. She underlined the importance of support from the head of the institution, and both top-down and bottom-up activities.

20. Responding to a question on whether public discussion on gender and environment were useful at the institutional level, both Ms. Emig and Mr. Lonergan agreed that the greater the visibility of the subject, the more momentum it gained in institutional settings.

21. In response to a question on budget, Ms. Emig and Mr. Lonergan both said that they did not draw from a specific budget for gender mainstreaming activities but they agreed that this would be preferable.

### **III. Recommendations**

#### **A. Women, poverty and the environment**

22. Following the deliberations of the working group on women, poverty and the environment, chaired by Mr. Davinder Lamba, the seminar agreed to recommend to the UNEP Women's Global Environmental Assembly:

(a) That the Assembly should take up the issue of the weak performance of governments and United Nations agencies in implementing past commitments;

(b) That the agenda for the Assembly should itemize the targets referred to in various environmental action plan documents in order to measure to what extent they had been reached;

(c) That recently started prototype projects in some five African countries in relation to poverty and the environment should be reviewed to check whether they were taking adequate account of gender issues.

#### **B. Beijing+10 and the Millennium Development Goals**

23. Following the deliberations of the working group on Beijing+10 and the Millennium Development Goals, chaired by Ms. June Zeitlin, the seminar agreed to recommend to the UNEP Women's Global Environmental Assembly:

(a) That a review of the implementation of gender and environment commitments made in the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing and in relation to the Millennium Development Goals should be carried out, including best and worst practices;

(b) That a budget should be established for the implementation of outcomes, recommendations and actions from the Assembly;

(c) That a decision should be drafted for consideration by the Governing Council of UNEP requesting UNEP to evaluate progress and gaps in gender mainstreaming and set new benchmarks for achieving gender policies.

#### **C. Establishment of a mentoring programme on women and youth**

24. Following the deliberations of the working group on the establishment of a mentoring programme on women and youth, chaired by Mr. Troy Govender, the seminar agreed to recommend to the UNEP Women's Global Environmental Assembly:

(a) That clear internal guidelines should be established to enhance women's opportunities in UNEP as well as external guidelines for non-governmental organizations for women and youth working on environmental issues;

(b) That a mentorship workshop should be held at the Assembly;

(c) That a pilot mentorship study should be conducted with participants from the present meeting, the results of which would be presented at the Assembly.

#### **D. How can UNEP better incorporate gender in its work?**

25. Following the deliberations of the working group on how UNEP could better incorporate gender in its work, chaired by Ms. Marie-Claire Cordonnier Segger, the seminar agreed to recommend to the UNEP Women's Global Environmental Assembly:

- (a) That there should be an audit of the UNEP gender mainstreaming strategy;
- (b) That a gender task force should be established, with a membership that included civil society and women, with specific terms of reference, mandate, timeframe and expected outputs, to be launched at the Assembly;
- (c) That a mechanism should be established in UNEP for monitoring gender mainstreaming, with targets such as increasing the women professional cadre to 50 per cent by 2007 and the women director's cadre up to 30 per cent by 2007.

#### **E. Biodiversity, water and indigenous knowledge at the core of sustainable and equitable development**

26. Following the deliberations of the working group on biodiversity, water and indigenous knowledge at the core of sustainable and equitable development, chaired by Ms. Lucy Mulenkei, the seminar agreed to recommend to the UNEP Women's Global Environmental Assembly:

- (a) That UNEP should carry out a global review on indigenous knowledge, biodiversity and water as they relate to women;
- (b) That a review should be carried out on the impact of water privatization policies on communities and on women;
- (c) That indigenous knowledge should be included in formal school curricula as well as informal learning from women.

### **IV. Planning the UNEP Women's Global Environmental Assembly**

27. A presentation was made by Ms. Minu Hemmati, rapporteur of the working group on planning the UNEP Women's Global Environmental Assembly, summarizing the discussions of the group.

- (a) The context of the Assembly was UNEP's revitalization of its gender programme with gender as a cross-cutting priority in its 2004-2005 programme of work, together with its aim to work in partnership with civil society groups and other organizations;
- (b) Objectives would include the following:
  - (i) Firming up partnerships with women's organizations and interaction with them;
  - (ii) The formulation of recommendations and inputs to the following session of the UNEP Governing Council;
  - (iii) To identify gaps in the gender programme of UNEP;
  - (iv) To review the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (Strategic Objective K on women and the environment);
  - (v) To strengthen young women's leadership in environmental protection and sustainable development.

- (c) Outcomes should include:
- (i) Clear action plans for follow up;
  - (ii) A report for launch at the Assembly to reflect women's experiences, and best and worst practices, in relation to both the Strategic Objective K of the Beijing Platform and the Millennium Development Goals;
  - (iii) A declaration to be issued at the end of the Assembly;
  - (iv) Funds for implementing the recommendations of the Assembly.

(d) Themes for consideration by the Assembly could be obtained by consulting the relevant documents presented at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and could include the following:

- (i) Women and environmental decision-making;
- (ii) Feminization of poverty;
- (iii) Sustainable development education;
- (iv) Peace and security;
- (v) Indigenous knowledge;
- (vi) Water and sanitation;
- (vii) Biodiversity;
- (viii) Cultural diversity;
- (ix) Mentoring and strengthening youth;
- (x) Sustainable production and consumption;
- (xi) Reproductive health, including HIV/AIDS.

(e) Under the heading of the preparatory process for the Assembly, the following points were made:

- (i) The criteria for participation should include regional balance, different age and ethnic groups, minority groups including people with disabilities and people with grassroots experience;
- (ii) The procedure for drafting the declaration by the Assembly should be planned;
- (iii) It was thought that the duration should be of four days;
- (iv) Further thought should be given to the preparatory processes and material, as well as financial resources;
- (v) A small planning committee was required and the secretariat would circulate the terms of reference for committee members, which would include the need to have representatives of the six working groups of the present seminar, a balanced regional representation, and at least two representatives from the Nairobi area.

#### **IV. Closure of the meeting**

28. The Chair invited Mr. Bakary Kante, director of the UNEP Division of Policy, Development and Law, to address the participants. He said that he wished to reiterate the readiness of UNEP, and his division in particular, to take all possible steps to engage women in the work of UNEP. His division was open to all suggestions to help achieve that and the present seminar would help to keep up the momentum of gender mainstreaming. He thanked all the participants for their very useful contributions to this process.

29. After the customary exchange of courtesies, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 4.50 p.m. on Thursday, 26 February 2004.

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