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**Governing Council
of the United Nations
Environment Programme**

**Twenty-sixth session of the Governing Council/
Global Ministerial Environment Forum**
Nairobi, 21–24 February 2011
Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Policy issues: State of the environment

**Draft decisions submitted by Governments for consideration by
the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum
at its twenty-sixth session**

Draft decision submitted by Switzerland

**Strengthening international cooperation to respond to
environmental crises**

The Governing Council,

Reaffirming the inherent linkages between environmental quality and humanitarian and development outcomes, in addition to the need to identify and tackle environmental risks linked to disasters, conflicts and industrial accidents (hereinafter referred to collectively as “crises”, in accordance with the terminology approved in the programme of work of the United Nations Environment Programme),

Noting with concern the extent to which the current limitations of international environmental crisis response systems could aggravate the environmental impacts of crises, and recognizing that greater efforts and support are needed to assist crisis-affected countries to respond to and manage environmental risks and impacts,

Acknowledging the need to tackle the underlying factors that contribute to an increase in the risk of disaster such as rural poverty, poor governance, degraded ecosystems and climate change,

Expressing concern at the possible future impacts of climate change such as increases in the frequency, intensity and unpredictability of extreme hydrological and meteorological events, which could result in corresponding increases in the number and scale of disasters and the need for international assistance,

Taking into account the particular vulnerability of developing countries, in particular small island developing States, to natural hazards and the environmental impacts of crises, which could undermine the attainment of internationally agreed development goals such as the Millennium Development Goals,

* UNEP/GC.26/1.

Recalling General Assembly resolutions 44/224 of 22 December 1989, on international cooperation in the monitoring, assessment and anticipation of environmental threats and in assistance in cases of environmental emergency, and 46/182 of 19 December 1991, on strengthening the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance by the United Nations,

Recalling also its decisions 21/17 of 9 February 2001 and 22/8 of 7 February 2003 on further improvement of environmental emergency prevention, preparedness, assessment, response and mitigation,

Noting that the medium-term strategy for the period 2010–2013 identifies disasters and conflicts as one of six cross-cutting thematic priorities of the United Nations Environment Programme, building on the experience gained in assisting over 100 countries affected by disasters, conflicts or industrial accidents over the past 15 years,

Welcoming the continued collaboration between the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, through their Joint Environment Unit, as the principal multilateral tool for mobilizing and coordinating international environmental crisis response,

Noting with appreciation the development of specialized expertise within the United Nations Environment Programme on mainstreaming environmental issues in humanitarian operations to minimize possible environmental impacts and ensure that they do no harm with regard to longer-term vulnerability and development,

Welcoming the role of the United Nations Environment Programme as the focal point for environment within the humanitarian coordination system through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee cluster approach and within inter-agency crisis response processes such as post-disaster and post-conflict needs assessments,

Recalling that, while it is a primary responsibility of Governments to establish adequate structures, procedures and capacities for responding to such risks, preventive action and preparedness should be always be prioritized as the means of dealing with environmental risks stemming from crises,

1. *Requests* the Executive Director:

(a) To coordinate, within the coming 12 months, the preparation of an inter-agency baseline document on current roles, responsibilities and divisions of labour between international organizations involved in international environmental crisis response, identifying key gaps and opportunities;

(b) To facilitate a process, on the basis of the above-mentioned document, over the coming three years to ensure that key organizations involved in environmental crisis response have a clear and mutually agreed understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities in various environmental crisis response scenarios;

(c) To monitor and evaluate the risks of future disasters and conflicts posed by environmental degradation, resource scarcity and the impacts of climate change and to highlight, in his contribution to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, among other things, the need to build capacities to prevent, prepare for and respond to such crises;

2. *Decides* to continue to strengthen the United Nations response mechanism for the coordination and mobilization of international assistance to countries facing environmental risks and impacts from crises, through, in particular, the disasters and conflicts subprogramme of the United Nations Environment Programme and the collaborative partnership between the Programme and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs;

3. *Requests* the Executive Director to continue to raise awareness of the environmental dimensions of crises and of the environmental implications of humanitarian and other international response operations;

4. *Also requests* the Executive Director to continue, through the implementation of the programme of work of the United Nations Environment Programme, to strengthen integrated approaches to reducing the risk of disaster and adapting to the impacts of climate change and climate variability through the promotion of improved environmental management and the application of ecosystem-based approaches;

5. *Urges* Governments, international organizations and other relevant stakeholders to provide countries, particularly developing countries, with technological support, capacity-building and resources for environmental crisis preparedness and response;

6. *Urges* Governments to allocate adequate resources for the effective mainstreaming of environmental needs in humanitarian response planning and operations and to provide in kind resources, including seconded personnel, to the United Nations Environment Programme and the collaborative partnership between the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to enable them efficiently to assist countries, in particular developing countries, facing environmental crises;

7. *Requests* the Executive Director to bring the outcomes of the forthcoming ninth meeting of the International Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies to the attention of the Governing Council at its twenty-seventh session;

8. *Also requests* the Executive Director to organize, in consultation with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other partners and within available resources, regular expert meetings on environmental emergencies to promote the application of voluntary guidelines for environmental emergencies among member States;

9. *Encourages* Governments, international organizations and relevant stakeholders in a position to do so to contribute to the Trust Fund for Environmental Emergencies of the United Nations Environment Programme to support developing countries in building their capacity to respond effectively to and manage crisis-related environmental impacts and risks.
