



Distr.: General
14 December 2012

English only



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

**Twenty-seventh session of the Governing Council/
Global Ministerial Environment Forum**
Nairobi, 18–22 February 2013
Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda
Policy issues: state of the environment

International Ecosystem Management Partnership

Note by the Executive Director¹

Summary

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Chinese Academy of Sciences, supported by the Government of China, established the International Ecosystem Management Partnership as the UNEP Collaborating Centre in the South and for the South (UNEP-IEMP) with the aim of mobilizing science to support policy-setting for sustainable ecosystem management in all developing countries. It covers three priority areas of work: (a) monitoring and capacity-building, (b) integrated knowledge management and (c) science for policy.

UNEP-IEMP is endeavouring to become the pillar and champion of the UNEP South-South Cooperation initiative, in particular in support of the implementation of the UNEP Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building called for by the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).

¹ Issued without formal editing.

I. The need for UNEP-IEMP to promote ecosystem management and South-South Cooperation

1. The Earth's ecosystems are the natural foundation of human civilization. A robust, healthy and sustainable ecosystem is a prerequisite to securing green economy development. However, recent studies have shown that the world's ecosystems have been profoundly degraded over the last 50 years, which has posed a serious threat to human life, livelihoods and development. Ecosystem management, "an integrated process to conserve and improve ecosystem health that sustains ecosystem services for human well-being", can halt and reverse the increasing degradation of ecosystems while also providing economic benefits and job opportunities, particularly for developing countries that are more directly dependent on provisioning with ecosystem services.

2. Developing countries face the dual challenges of economic development and ecosystem conservation, and share similar lessons and experiences in ecosystem management. That is why South-South cooperation plays an increasingly important role in ecosystem management, which is becoming a strong pillar in the implementation of UNEP's ecosystem management subprogramme.

3. On the other hand, developing countries, especially the emerging economies such as Brazil, China, India and South Africa, have become more capable of supporting South-South cooperation in terms of financial support, capacity-building and science and technology. A 2009 United Nations report noted that South-South merchandise trade grew from \$577 billion in 1995 to more than \$2 trillion in 2006, and accounted for 20 per cent of world trade in 2007. In 2011, China-Africa bilateral trade reached \$166 billion. India is catching up, projecting that its trade with Africa will amount to \$90 billion by 2015. In addition, China and India provide billions of dollars of development aid to Africa. At Rio+20, Brazil and China respectively announced \$6 million contributions to the UNEP Trust Fund.

4. Another example is the increasing contribution from the South to the advancement of world science. The *UNESCO Science Report 2010* disclosed that developing countries contributed more than 30 per cent of world scientific publications in 2008, more than 18 per cent of world expenditure on research and development and 36 per cent of world researchers in 2007. On all these counts, China is in a predominant position, ranking number 2 in the world after the United States of America. This has laid the foundation to promote South-South cooperation through working with science communities across the developing world.

5. China is not only one of the leading emerging economies in the world, but it also possesses a wealth of experience, good practice, knowledge and technology in the domain of ecosystem monitoring and management which could be shared with other developing countries. For example, the Chinese Ecosystem Research Network, an outfit of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and arguably the largest national ecosystem research network in the world, is undertaking ecosystem monitoring, research, demonstration and policy support. The unique approach of integrating monitoring and research with demonstration and national policy-setting directly serves decision-making for ecosystem management. This is of particular importance to other developing countries as a way to bridge science and policy gaps.

6. UNEP is pleased to work with China to assist in facilitating South-South cooperation on ecosystem management. Through this collaboration, knowledge, experience and capacity in ecosystem management can be extended to other developing countries. Hence the establishment of the International Ecosystem Management Partnership provides such a value-added opportunity.

II. The Process: how has UNEP-IEMP been established?

7. In May 2010, leaders of both UNEP and the Chinese Academy of Sciences felt that there was a strong need to establish such a collaboration to enhance ecosystem management in developing countries through strengthening South-South cooperation and the science-policy interface. In August 2010, UNEP and the Academy signed a memorandum of understanding, whereby they inter alia agreed to advance towards a strengthened strategic partnership through "joint development of the International Ecosystem Management Partnership (UNEP-IEMP) together with the relevant agencies in China, aiming to promote research and management of ecosystem and biodiversity and their integration into green economy in developing countries".

8. In July 2011, the Ministry of Environmental Protection, the designated focal point authorized by the State Council of China for official contacts with UNEP, confirmed to UNEP that it "supports the host Chinese organization for this new setup (of UNEP-IEMP)".

9. Taking a pioneering approach, principals of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and UNEP officially launched UNEP-IEMP as an international programme of UNEP on 18 November 2011 in Beijing, witnessed and blessed by leaders and/or their representatives of the Ministry of Environmental Protection, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of China, the National Development and Reform Commission, the National Natural Science Foundation of China and many international organizations.

10. Since its inception in 2010, UNEP-IEMP has made encouraging progress. With strong support from the Academy of Sciences and other Government agencies in China, it has developed a multinational team of 15 full-time and 11 part-time staff. Under a three-year work plan, UNEP-IEMP has mobilized essential funds for project activities, including \$50 million from the Global Climate Facility Special Climate Change Fund to support UNEP's Ecosystem-Based Adaptation Flagship Programme in Africa and the Asia-Pacific region, with Mauritania, Nepal and Seychelles as pilot countries. With financial support from the National Natural Science Foundation of China, UNEP-IEMP has established the first forest monitoring and research station in Rwanda to support that country's national programme on ecosystem conservation and restoration. In support of Rio+20 and its follow up actions, UNEP-IEMP completed eight policy papers on ecosystem management and the green economy and organized two high-level meetings for engaging ministers, parliamentarians, world science and business leaders, and principals of international and United Nations organizations, such as UNEP, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations.

11. These endeavours have laid the foundation for turning UNEP-IEMP from an international programme to a UNEP collaborating centre in the South and for the South. The executive heads of UNEP and the Chinese Academy of Sciences signed an agreement in Beijing on 15 December 2012 on the establishment of the International Ecosystem Management Partnership.

III. Identity, niche and value added to UNEP

12. UNEP-IEMP is the UNEP initiative in the South and for the South to mobilize science to support policy-setting for sustainable ecosystem management in all developing countries. It is a China-based UNEP collaborating centre focusing on science and policy interface on issues of ecosystem management in all developing countries.

13. The objectives of UNEP-IEMP are to provide science and policy support to enhance the delivery of ecosystem services for human well-being in developing countries; to increase capacity for ecosystem management in those countries; and to synthesize scientific findings on ecosystem management for decision-making. It has three mutually-supportive and interrelated initiatives:

- (a) Monitoring and capacity-building
- (b) Integrated knowledge management
- (c) Science for policy

14. The main clients of UNEP-IEMP include national Governments, regional and global intergovernmental bodies and programmes, and United Nations agencies, as well as development agencies and the science community.

15. The Niche of UNEP-IEMP rests on the integration of ecosystem management, South-South cooperation and science-policy interface in pursuing sustainability in developing countries. As a UNEP collaborating centre, UNEP-IEMP complements and contributes to the work of UNEP divisions, subprogrammes, regional offices and other collaborating centres, mostly based in the North. It focuses its activities on three subprogrammes, Ecosystem Management, Climate Change and Environment under Review, and the promotion of ecosystem approaches for the green economy in developing countries, as well as providing support to cooperative programmes and projects that are under agreement between UNEP and relevant organizations in China.

IV. How does UNEP-IEMP work?

16. UNEP-IEMP has been established by UNEP at the Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resource Research of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. It will be known as a global centre of excellence in the field of ecosystem management, and will serve as the place of collaboration on ecosystem research and management between UNEP and the Academy.

17. UNEP-IEMP will prepare a biennial workplan that coincides with the UNEP biennial programme of work, covering the current UNEP biennium in detail and the subsequent biennium in

outline form. This will lay out the broad objectives of the collaboration projects and their contribution to the UNEP programme of work for the biennium.

18. UNEP-IEMP will be overseen and guided by a Steering Committee to be co-chaired jointly by principals or their designated representatives from UNEP and the Academy. The Steering Committee will provide technical and programmatic advice and guidance to UNEP-IEMP for the implementation of all projects and initiatives in the areas of competence of UNEP-IEMP.

19. In accordance with United Nations rules and procedures, UNEP will appoint the director of UNEP-IEMP to provide intellectual leadership of programmes and projects, maintain conformity with United Nations rules and regulations, and ensure a relevant contribution to the UNEP programme of work. The Chinese Academy of Sciences will appoint a manager in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Academy. The manager will be responsible for the management of human and financial resources, as well as the daily operation of the Centre.

V. The increasing role of UNEP-IEMP in a post Rio+20 era

20. World leaders at Rio+20 “committed to strengthening the role of the United Nations Environment Programme as the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, that promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and that serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment”. In particular, UNEP-IEMP can contribute to the strengthening of UNEP in the following activities been highlighted in the Rio+20 outcome document “The future we want”:

- (a) Promote a strong science-policy interface, building on existing international instruments, assessments, panels and information networks, including the Global Environmental Outlook, as one of the processes aimed at bringing together information and assessment to support informed decision-making;
- (b) Disseminate and share evidence-based environmental information and raise public awareness on critical as well as emerging environmental issues;
- (c) Provide capacity-building to countries as well as support and facilitate access to technology (“The future we want”, para. 88).

21. UNEP-IEMP promotes the centrality of ecosystems and biodiversity to sustainable development, which contributes to the implementation of ecosystem relevant paragraphs of the Rio+20 outcome, “The future we Want” has approximately 30 paragraphs (more than 10 per cent of the 283 paragraphs of the whole document) around the theme of ecosystem resilience and its link to people’s livelihoods, especially the poor. For instance, paragraph 4 reaffirms “the need to achieve sustainable development by: ... promoting integrated and sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems that supports, inter alia, economic, social and human development while facilitating ecosystem conservation, regeneration and restoration and resilience in the face of new and emerging challenges”.

22. World leaders at Rio+20 “reiterated support for South-South cooperation, as well as triangular cooperation” and “called for the continued and focused implementation of the UNEP Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-Building” Given its unique niche in the South and for the South, UNEP-IEMP is in the best position to promote South-South cooperation on ecosystem management and contribute to the implementation of the UNEP Bali Strategic Plan.

23. World leaders at Rio+20 recognized “the important contribution of the scientific and technological community to sustainable development” and expressed their commitment to “working with and fostering collaboration among academic, scientific and technological community, in particular in developing countries, to close the technological gap between developing and developed countries, strengthen the science-policy interface as well as to foster international research collaboration on sustainable development”.

24. UNEP has, since the very beginning, been working with the scientific community on a number of important issues of sustainable development through a series of multilateral mechanisms such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Global Environment Outlook, and the newly established Intergovernmental Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. Complementing the work of UNEP’s six collaborating centres in developed countries, UNEP-IEMP focuses on promoting science for policy in developing countries.

25. UNEP-IEMP is best positioned and prepared to play an increasingly important role in ecosystem management in developing countries in the post Rio+20 era. Firstly, UNEP-IEMP as a joint initiative of UNEP and China, understanding both what developing countries need and what emerging economies such as China could offer, could provide technical support to developing country Governments to translate Rio+20 outcomes into national action plans for ecosystem management. Secondly, UNEP-IEMP, with its increasing team backed by its partners in the Chinese Academy of Sciences, in particular the Chinese Ecological Research Network, has the technical capacity to provide practical support for enhancing the capacities of developing countries to implement their respective plans. Thirdly, UNEP-IEMP in its inception stage has conducted relevant projects and initiatives which have laid a solid foundation for taking on more challenging tasks.
