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

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

Nairobi, 18–22 February 2013

Items 4 (c) and (d) of the provisional agenda*

**Policy issues: international environmental governance;
coordination and cooperation within the United Nations
system on environmental matters**

**Progress reports mandated by the Governing Council at
previous sessions**

**Coordination across the United Nations system, including the
Environment Management Group**

Report by the Executive Director

Summary

Pursuant to paragraph 4 of decision SS.XII/2 of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme, the present document provides a progress report on the work of the Environment Management Group.

It presents information on the Group's activities and achievements in enhancing coherence in programming environmental activities, mainstreaming environment and enhancing sustainability of policies, programmes and management practices in the United Nations system. It sets out the Group's strategic approach and points out the directions of its future work in contributing to implementation of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want".

* UNEP/GC.27/1.

I. Suggested action

1. The Governing Council may wish to consider the adoption of a decision along the following lines:

The Governing Council,

Recognizing the role of the United Nations Environment Programme in enhancing coordination and collaboration across the United Nations system with a view to achieving greater coherence in environmental activities,

Recalling its decision SS.XII/2, on enhanced coordination across the United Nations system, including the Environment Management Group,

Welcoming the efforts of the Executive Director, including in his capacity as Chair of the Environment Management Group, and those of the Group's members, in promoting cooperation and joint approaches across the United Nations system on environmental activities,

Expressing appreciation for the progress report prepared under the guidance of the senior officials of the Environment Management Group at their eighteenth meeting and as presented by the Executive Director,¹ including the strategic considerations of the Group in supporting the implementation of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want",² and also the contribution to the post-2015 development agenda,

Commending the Group on its progress in facilitating cooperation across the United Nations system with a view to assisting Member States in implementing the environmental agenda for sustainable development,

Welcoming in particular the Group's contribution to the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and its decision to provide United Nations system-wide support for implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020,³

Welcoming also the Group's focus and approach in ensuring that its future work supports the implementation of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development,

1. *Supports* the Group's continued efforts to mainstream environmental considerations into activities at the policy, programme and management levels in close cooperation with the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and its subsidiary bodies;

2. *Encourages* the Group to continue its support for the drylands agenda and preparation of a United Nations system-wide action plan on drylands for the period 2012–2018 in follow-up to its report on drylands⁴ and following the request of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, for consideration at its eleventh session;⁵

3. *Also encourages* the Group to continue its contribution to efforts to promote sustainability in the work of the United Nations system, including in environmental sustainability management and peer reviews, and welcomes the decision to recommend to the Chief Executives Board the transfer to the Board of the framework for environmental and social sustainability in the United Nations system to ensure follow-up and implementation of the framework in all its dimensions;⁶

4. *Requests* the Executive Director in his capacity as Chair of the Group to provide a progress report on the Group's work to the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum at its thirteenth special session;

¹ UNEP/GC.27/15/Add.1.

² General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex.

³ Decision X/2, annex, of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

⁴ *Global Drylands: A United Nations System-wide Response*, United Nations Environment Management Group, 2011.

⁵ See ICCD/COP(10)/31/Add.1, decision 9/COP.10.

⁶ Report of the eighteenth meeting of the senior officials of the Environment Management Group (EMG/SOM.18/06), action IV.

5. *Invites* the Executive Director in his capacity as the Chair of the Group to transmit a progress report on the Group's work to the governing bodies of the Group's member organizations, through the heads of those organizations, for their information and perusal.

II. Introduction

2. The Governing Council, in its decision SS.XII/2 on enhanced coordination across the United Nations system, including the Environment Management Group, expressed appreciation for a progress report prepared under the guidance of the senior officials of the Group at their seventeenth meeting and presented by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). It commended the Group on its progress in facilitating cooperation across the United Nations system to assist Member States in implementing the environmental agenda.

3. The Governing Council also expressed its appreciation for the Group's contribution to the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) through its reports *Working Towards a Balanced and Inclusive Green Economy: A United Nations System-wide Perspective* and *A Framework for Advancing Environmental and Social Sustainability in the United Nations System*.⁷

4. In referring to the need for continued cooperation with the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and its subsidiary bodies, the Council encouraged the Group to continue to promote coherence in programming environmental activities in the United Nations system, including by mainstreaming environmental concerns into sectoral programmes. It encouraged further work by the Group in the areas of biodiversity in support of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and of desertification through preparation of a United Nations system-wide action plan for the period 2012–2018 in follow-up to its report on drylands and enhancing sustainability in the United Nations system, and requested the Executive Director in his capacity as Chair of the Group to submit a progress report on the Group's work to the Council/Forum at its twenty-seventh session.

5. The present progress report may assist the Council in performing its mandate of providing general policy guidance for the direction and coordination of environmental programmes within the United Nations system, as set out in General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII). It may also assist the Council in its deliberations on follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, in particular by enhancing the mainstreaming of environmental considerations across the United Nations system.

6. In this context, the Council may wish to consider its role in contributing to the coherence of the environmental pillar. It may also wish to express its views on the directions that the Group's further work should take, given that the Group's members constitute a unique and diverse set of environmental capacity and competence, as demonstrated in the report on environment in the United Nations system, set out in the annex to the note by the Executive Director prepared for the twenty-sixth session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (UNEP/GC.26/INF/23). In doing so, it may in addition wish to further the practice of informing the General Assembly of the Group's work pursuant to General Assembly resolution 58/209.

7. The eighteenth meeting of the senior officials of the Group was held on 27 November 2012 by video-conference and was co-chaired by Mr. Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP and Chair of the Environment Management Group, and Mr. Wu Hongbo, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs. The senior officials segment was preceded by a technical segment. The documentation of the meeting is available from the Group's website (www.unemg.org).

8. At that meeting, the senior officials considered the workplan of the Environment Management Group for 2013–2014 and provided the strategic directions for work by the Group to contribute to implementation of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and to respond to the expectations voiced by Group members and by intergovernmental bodies such as the Governing Council and the conferences of the parties to the conventions on biodiversity and desertification. They welcomed the opportunity to inform the Governing Council and, through it, the General Assembly, of their work. They expressed appreciation for the guidance received from the Council and requested the Chair to continue the practice of circulating a draft of the Group's report on its work to Group members for their comments, and to submit the final report to the Governing Council at its twenty-seventh session.

⁷ All documents of the eighteenth meeting of the senior officials of the Environment Management Group, including the Group workplan 2013–2014, are available from the Group's website (www.unemg.org).

9. The present report sets out the progress made in implementing the Group's workplan to date and the directions set by the senior officials in relation to the work planned for the coming period. The Group's workplan is implemented through open-ended, time-bound issue management groups and consultative processes.

10. All the reports and publications pertaining to the Environment Management Group and referred to in the present report may be found on the Group's website (www.unemg.org).

III. Strategic approach of the Group to support implementation of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

11. At their eighteenth meeting, the senior officials of the Environment Management Group provided their views on the issues under consideration by the Group and suggestions for their future follow-up, as well as on the Group's contribution to implementation of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want". Among those views were the following:

(a) The contribution to implementation of the outcome document should constitute the overall agenda of the Environment Management Group for its future work. The outcome document in its various provisions calls for United Nations system-wide coordination and cooperation in supporting sustainable development, including on issues such as biodiversity, land, green economy and sustainability in the work of the United Nations system, which could benefit from the Group's continued support;

(b) The Environment Management Group has a key role in the follow-up to over 10 paragraphs in the outcome document. It appears in a joint leading role with other entities in five specific areas, including green economy, mainstreaming sustainable development in the work of the United Nations, biodiversity, and the sharing of climate and weather information and early warning systems;

(c) The Secretary-General's implementation framework setting out the responsibilities of the United Nations system in implementing the outcome document assigns a role to the Environment Management Group in all these areas, rendering the Group's input to the process of follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development even more relevant;

(d) Today's organizational landscape is characterized by a multiplicity of United Nations system coordinating mechanisms, focusing on the broader sustainable development agenda. The Environment Management Group offers a space where the environmental expertise and views of the multilateral environmental agreements can be heard and harnessed. With the exception of the three Rio conventions – on biodiversity, climate change and desertification – the multilateral environmental agreements are at times somewhat disconnected from the global sustainable development-related processes: the Environment Management Group can play a greater role in bridging that gap;

(e) Through the outcome document, the Heads of State and Government and high-level representatives attending the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development asked the United Nations system fully to mainstream sustainable development in all its dimensions in its work and operations. To that end, the framework on environmental and social sustainability will be translated into a road map that clarifies elements essential for its implementation and for a common approach. The framework will be proposed to the Chief Executives Board for a system-wide commitment to ensure its follow-up and implementation at policy, programme and management levels. This would support the Secretary-General, who has been asked to report regularly to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council on progress on mainstreaming sustainable development in the work of the United Nations system;

(f) The Environment Management Group could contribute to the work of the future high-level political forum on sustainable development by providing a coordinated United Nations system input to the forum on environmental issues;

(g) A more systematic link could be established between the work of the Environment Management Group and the Chief Executives Board, including the High-level Committee on Programmes, the High-level Committee on Management and the United Nations Development Group, so that environmental issues prepared by the Environment Management Group could be brought to the attention of the Chief Executives Board for its consideration and integration with other system-wide sustainable development issues. This would be in accordance with the outcome document, which

underscored the need to strengthen United Nations system-wide coordination, especially in reporting and reinforcing cooperative efforts under existing inter-agency mechanisms;

(h) In addition to reporting on the work of the Environment Management Group to the UNEP Governing Council, the Group's reports can be made available to the governing bodies of other agencies for their information and perusal.

12. The senior officials also discussed a possible contribution by the Environment Management Group to the post-2015 development agenda, including the sustainable development goals, within the existing processes and through the frameworks established by the Secretary-General. They decided that, as a first step, the Environment Management Group, through a small drafting group, should develop a framing paper. This exercise would articulate how the Group, including its issue management groups on land and biodiversity, could make such a contribution by providing their perspectives on key environmental priorities for the post-2015 development agenda. This could also support the United Nations Development Group thematic consultation on environmental sustainability. The contribution by the Environment Management Group could be tailored as input to the various post-2015 work streams and processes, including the sustainable development goals, and would help ensure that the environmental dimension is not an add-on but rather an integral part of the post-2015 development agenda.

13. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as co-chairs of the United Nations System Task Team on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda, were invited to support the Environment Management Group in articulating the kind of input and contribution that could be provided by the Group to help in the development of a system-wide vision and road map for the post-2015 development agenda. The Environment Management Group issue management groups on biodiversity and land, in carrying out their work and bearing in mind the current post-2015 development process, will consider how biodiversity and land concerns could be best integrated into the sustainable development goals.

14. The action points adopted by the senior officials, including the Environment Management Group workplan 2013–2014, can be found on the Group's website (www.unemg.org).

IV. Enhanced coherence in programming environmental activities in the United Nations system, including mainstreaming

A. Issue management group on biodiversity

15. At their seventeenth meeting, the senior officials decided to continue the work of the issue management group on biodiversity to prepare a United Nations system-wide approach to support implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020, including a coherent response to support the revision and implementation of the national biodiversity strategies and actions plans based on the Environment Management Group report *Advancing the Biodiversity Agenda: A United Nations System-wide Contribution*.

16. In its decision XII/2, the UNEP Governing Council encouraged the Group to contribute to implementation of the international agenda on biodiversity and, in particular, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020.

17. At their fifth meeting on 9 November 2011, hosted by the Convention on Biological Diversity in Montreal, the members of the Environment Management Group issue management group on biodiversity agreed to map their current activities and initiatives in support of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020, with a view to providing a basis for an agreed approach to a coherent United Nations system-wide contribution to the strategic plan.

18. On 8 November 2011, a briefing report was provided by the Environment Management Group secretariat on the work of the United Nations system in support of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets to the joint bureau meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice and the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on the Review of Implementation of the Convention.

19. In recommendation 4/6,⁸ adopted at its fourth meeting, held in Montreal from 7 to 11 May 2012, the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on the Review of Implementation requested the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, among other issues, to compile, review and update the various recommendations for synergistic activities and to cross-map the existing

⁸ Available from <http://www.cbd.int/recommendations/wgri/?m=wgri-04>.

and potential contributions of the biodiversity-related conventions, the Rio conventions and other relevant conventions and organizations, with the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, through the ongoing work of the issue management group on biodiversity of the Environment Management Group.

20. At its sixth meeting, held in Montreal on 8 May 2012, the issue management group considered the first draft United Nations synthesis mapping report on biodiversity, based on inputs from 17 Environment Management Group members. The report includes a brief synopsis of the relevance of the Aichi Targets for the work of each agency; information on the existing targets, goals or objectives established by each agency and endorsed by the governing body of the agencies that contribute to the achievement of the Aichi Targets; information on existing or planned policy-relevant, strategic or programmatic activities and functions, in particular capacity-building, or other support for countries that contribute to the achievement of the Aichi Targets and related agency-level targets, goals or objectives. The mapping can be used to identify targets where there are current gaps and to ascertain how the issue management group can build a coalition to close them. UNDP, UNEP and the Convention on Biological Diversity jointly prepared a draft note on cooperation at the national level, including a framework for identifying areas where agencies can contribute to the revision and implementation of national biodiversity strategies and actions plans and possibilities for coordination at the national level.⁹

21. The preliminary findings of the synthesis mapping report show that a number of members of the Environment Management Group are involved in supporting the Aichi Targets through a diverse range of activities as part of their own strategies. Most members of the Environment Management Group could, however, greatly enhance their contributions to the implementation of the Aichi Targets through the existing mechanisms for cooperation. The United Nations system provides a range of capacity support for national actions, including tools for monitoring and evaluation, information exchange, awareness-raising and resource mobilization. The report suggests further work by the United Nations system:

- (a) To continue mapping strategies, activities and responsibilities at the global, regional and national levels to serve as a living tool for cooperation, planning and reporting on progress;
- (b) To identify approaches for the development of sectoral support for the national biodiversity strategies and action plans as a mainstreaming and integrative tool in the countries concerned;
- (c) To ensure the better integration of existing policy documents on biodiversity into the work of the United Nations agencies;
- (d) To integrate all the biodiversity-related conventions into the updating and implementation of national biodiversity strategies and actions plans;
- (e) To identify cooperation at the regional level in support of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the implementation of the Aichi Targets.

22. A progress report on the work performed by the Environment Management Group in response to the relevant decisions of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at its tenth meeting, together with the draft synthesis mapping report on United Nations system contributions to the biodiversity targets, was provided by the Chair of the Group in the form of an information document to the Conference of the Parties at its eleventh meeting, held in Hyderabad, India, from 9 to 18 October 2012.¹⁰

23. At its eleventh meeting, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity highlighted the contribution of the Environment Management Group to the task of mainstreaming the Aichi Biodiversity Targets throughout the United Nations system, and welcomed its report¹¹ on the contribution of the United Nations system to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020. It invited the Environment Management Group to continue facilitating cooperation among its members in support of the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and to provide a progress report for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its twelfth meeting. The Conference of the Parties also requested the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological

⁹ The full report of the sixth meeting of the issue management group is available from the Environment Management Group website (www.unemg.org).

¹⁰ UNEP/CBD/COP/11/INF/5, available from the Environment Management Group website (www.unemg.org).

¹¹ Ibid.

Diversity to continue contributing to the activities of the Environment Management Group and its issues management group on biodiversity.¹²

24. The seventh meeting of the issue management group was held on 15 October 2012 on the margins of the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Hyderabad. The meeting, which was co-chaired by the Convention on Biological Diversity and the World Bank, discussed possible actions in support of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, based on the findings of its synthetic mapping report.

25. At their eighteenth meeting, the senior officials decided to continue the work of the issue management group on biodiversity for one more year to facilitate further synergies and cooperation by the United Nations system to support implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020, as well as the strategic planning processes of the biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements, and to prepare a common approach for supporting national biodiversity strategies and actions plans. A progress report of the Group will be submitted to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at its twelfth meeting.

B. Issue management group on land

26. Desertification, land degradation and drought are major economic, social and environmental problems of concern to many countries in all regions of the world. All those problems are likely to be exacerbated substantially by climate change and population growth, among other causes. The 10-year strategic plan (for the period 2008–2018) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification provides a global framework to support the development and implementation of national and regional policies, programmes and measures that would prevent, control and reverse desertification, land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought through scientific and technological excellence, raising of public awareness, standard-setting, advocacy and resource mobilization, thereby contributing to poverty reduction.

27. The senior officials established an issue management group on land in 2009, with a focus on drylands, to propose modalities for a United Nations system-wide contribution to the implementation of the 10-year strategic plan. The report *Global Drylands: A United Nations System-wide Contribution* was prepared on the basis of contributions by 20 United Nations entities and submitted as an information document to the Conference of the Parties of the Convention to Combat Desertification at its tenth meeting, held in Changwon, Republic of Korea, in October 2011. A presentation of the report was made by members of the issue management group at a side event held during the Conference of the Parties, which was well attended by Member States and other stakeholders.

28. The report provides a consolidated response, in line with the “One United Nations” initiative, in support of the Drylands Agenda and it contributes to the 10-year strategic plan of the Convention to Combat Desertification. It highlights the importance of global drylands to key emerging issues on the international agenda, including climate change, food security and human settlements, together with options for follow-up action.¹³ The report sets out a common vision and agenda for United Nations system-wide action on drylands management and the Organization’s role in addressing climate change and food security, through a positive drylands development and investment approach.

29. At its tenth meeting, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification welcomed the global drylands report prepared by the Environment Management Group, took note of the proposed coordinated action of the United Nations system on drylands, as set out in the report, and called on the Executive Secretary of the Convention, in collaboration with the Environment Management Group, to work on a concrete action plan for 2012–2018 for promoting and strengthening relationships with other international organizations, institutions and agencies.¹⁴

30. In its decision SS.XII/2, the UNEP Governing Council expressed support for the work of the Environment Management Group in preparing, for consideration by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification at its eleventh meeting, a United Nations system-wide action plan for the period 2012–2018 as a follow-up to its report on drylands.

31. The work by the Environment Management Group on drylands supports the provisions set out in paragraphs 205 to 209 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable

¹² See UNEP/CBD/COP/11/35, annex I, decision XI/6.

¹³ A feature was included on the current crisis in the Horn of Africa, highlighting United Nations efforts to build resilience, reduce vulnerability and enhance capacity for disaster management, emphasizing that a long-term, pro-investment approach offers the opportunity to support the population of the Horn of Africa in responding to drought.

¹⁴ ICCD/COP(10)/31/Add.1, decision 9/COP.10, para. 14.

Development, in particular its insistence in paragraph 209 on the need for cooperation through the sharing of climate and weather information, and forecasting and early warning systems related to desertification, land degradation and drought, as well as to dust storms and sandstorms, at the global, regional and subregional levels. In that context, States and relevant organizations were invited to cooperate in the sharing of related information, forecasting and early-warning systems.

32. The issue management group on land organized its third meeting in form of a teleconference on 16 May 2012 to discuss the steps for follow-up to the drylands report and preparation of an action plan on drylands. It was agreed that strong political leadership was needed to champion and advocate issues raised in the global drylands report and that the Convention to Combat Desertification was the agency best suited to lead that process. Participants also stressed the need to explore mechanisms for implementing the action plan and to promote a green and fair economy approach tailored to dryland conditions, with the support of the private sector and civil society. It was agreed that the action plan could benefit from state-of-the-art knowledge for dryland development, identifying the things that worked and those that did not work, best lessons learned, good practices, voluntary guidelines, and other matters, focusing on the quality of the knowledge and on consensus-building, rather than on mere quantity of information. The issue management group also stressed the need to identify potential donors for implementation of the action plan.

33. At their eighteenth meeting, in response to the decision by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification at its tenth meeting, the senior officials agreed to extend the issue management group for one more year to prepare a United Nations-wide action plan on drylands for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its eleventh meeting.

C. Issue management group on the green economy

34. The issue management group on the green economy was established by the senior officials at their fifteenth meeting to assess how the United Nations system could more coherently support countries in making the transition to a green economy and to work on joint and consistent messaging on measures.

35. In its decision 26/11, the Governing Council encouraged the Environment Management Group to prepare a contribution by the United Nations system, identifying existing studies on the green economy, to feed in to the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

36. Forty members of the United Nations system have contributed, through the issue management group, to the preparation of the report *Working Towards a Balanced and Inclusive Green Economy: A United Nations System-wide Perspective*. The Executive Director of UNEP submitted the report in his capacity as chair of the Group as an input by the United Nations system to the preparatory processes of the Conference on Sustainable Development.

37. The report aimed to facilitate a common understanding of the green economy approach and the measures required for a transition to a green economy, providing an assessment of how the United Nations system could coherently support countries in making such a transition.

38. The report reflects a growing recognition of the shortcomings of business-as-usual approaches practised by both public and private sector institutions over the past two decades. It highlights the need for more integrated approaches between different international agencies and government departments, and also more targeted investments across the environmental, economic and social domains. It also emphasizes that a green economy has to be a people-centred economy, as it requires a healthy, educated and informed workforce; and it must improve the daily lives of billions of people, including those living in poverty, those who are unemployed, the working poor and youth.

39. In his statement in the report, the Secretary-General observed that the United Nations entities are keenly aware of the resource challenges that countries face in meeting the needs of a growing and urbanizing world population and points out that the report highlights how those challenges can and must be addressed as part of integrated development models that focus on poverty and human well-being. The report promotes a United Nations system-wide understanding of the green economy approach to the attainment of sustainable development and offers a range of instruments that Governments can use to affect investment choices and consumer behaviour. These include mobilizing financial resources, full cost pricing, regulatory instruments, sustainable trade and green markets, innovation and technology, and indicators for measuring progress towards transition.

40. The report also calls for public spending to target green infrastructure and research and development that can spur green technologies and innovation, along with better health-care and education. The report notes numerous United Nations-backed initiatives already under way. It finds

that the United Nations entities, along with the Bretton Woods institutions and other intergovernmental agencies, are well positioned to support the transition towards a balanced and inclusive green economy at the national level, where they can provide a range of technical advice and capacity support to Governments.

41. In addition to its extensive green economy report, the issue management group prepared a short report, entitled: “Balanced and inclusive green economies, summary for policymakers”, in order more effectively to communicate the key messages of an inclusive green economy for sustainable development for policy makers at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.¹⁵

42. On 16 June 2012, the issue management group also organized a side event at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, at which the United Nations system-wide perspective on the transition towards inclusive green economy pathways was communicated to a broad audience. The side event also demonstrated how the United Nations system could support Member States in achieving sustainable development through a green economy approach. It provided an opportunity for a discussion between the United Nations agencies and Member States in which they explored how the United Nations system could mobilize its capacities in a more coordinated manner to assist Member States in their efforts to move on to inclusive green economy pathways as a follow-up to the Environment Management Group report.

43. In its paragraphs 66 to 68 on the green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development calls for a coordinated United Nations system-wide contribution to support developing countries upon request to achieve sustainable development, including through, inter alia, green economy policies in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, in particular in least developed countries. On 28 September 2012, a conference call was held among members of the issue management group in which they discussed possible actions on the green economy in response to those paragraphs of the outcome document.

44. At their eighteenth meeting, the senior officials noted the importance for the United Nations system further to coordinate its activities on an inclusive green economy in the post-Rio+20 era. They agreed on the continuation of the issue management group on the green economy, in response to paragraph 66 of the outcome document and the Secretary-General’s framework on Rio+20 follow-up. The senior officials decided to extend the work of the issue management group for one more year to take stock of the existing United Nations system-wide web-based platforms and green economy resources, including toolkits, best practices, lessons learned and analytical assessment and methodologies, including for evaluation, and to provide suggestions on how those resources could be catalogued and made publicly available through an appropriate platform, to ensure that the Member States were better served. The issue management group will also present options to the senior officials of the Environment Management Group at their nineteenth session on where the coordination of work relating to the inclusive green economy should be positioned within the United Nations system.

V. Enhanced sustainability of policies, management practices and operations in the United Nations system

A. Consultations on advancing the framework for environmental and social sustainability in the United Nations system

45. As part of its work to enhance sustainability in the internal work of the United Nations system, at their seventeenth meeting the senior officials of the Environment Management Group prepared the report *A Framework for Advancing Environmental and Social Sustainability in the United Nations System*, including a draft joint heads of agencies statement and a United Nations sustainability framework. The report was prepared through an inter-agency consultative process which was established in 2009 to prepare options for enhancing environmental and social sustainability in the work of the United Nations system in a coherent manner.

46. By its adoption of the sustainability framework, the United Nations system fully recognized the need to continue to internalize sustainability principles into its policies, programming and operations in a systematic and coherent manner. A number of norms and standards have already been developed but there is still a need for a coherent institutional strategy to make these environmental and social principles and norms operational across United Nations agencies.

¹⁵ A summary of the green economy report is available from the Environment Management Group website (www.unemg.org).

47. Following the decision of the senior officials at their seventeenth meeting, the Chair of the Environment Management Group presented the sustainability framework to the co-chairs of the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development as the Group's contribution to the Conference's compilation document. The Chair also brought the sustainability framework to the attention of the Chief Executives Board at its meetings in the second quarter of 2012 and of its High-level Committee on Programmes and High-level Committee on Management.

48. In its decision XII/2, the Governing Council encouraged the Group to continue its consultations on advancing the framework for environmental and social sustainability in the United Nations system and to move towards environmental sustainability management systems and climate neutrality. The recommended approach in the sustainability framework is flexible, allowing each agency to implement it in a manner appropriate to its circumstances while respecting a minimum requirement.

49. On 31 May 2012, the Environment Management Group's consultative process on environmental and social sustainability held its fourth meeting in the form of a teleconference to discuss the implementation of the framework. A number of agencies have made progress, including through developing policies and tools or by refining existing sustainability systems or practices. A good level of knowledge and experience is already available in the United Nations system, and this will be accessible on an online platform provided by UNDP. The World Health Organization (WHO) is leading the development of a questionnaire survey to assess progress and to identify agencies' needs in implementing the framework.

50. The United Nations sustainability framework underpins implementation of the provisions in paragraphs 91 to 96 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development on enhancing sustainability measures in the work and operation of the United Nations system. Accordingly, at their eighteenth meeting, the Environment Management Group senior officials extended the work of the consultative process for one more year to support implementation of the sustainability framework, including by translating it into a road map that clarified the elements in the framework essential for its implementation and for a common approach. The senior officials also agreed to recommend to the Chief Executives Board at its first meeting in 2014, or earlier, the transfer of the framework and its implementation to the Board.

B. Issue management group on environmental sustainability management

51. At their seventeenth meeting, in September 2011, the senior officials of the Environment Management Group considered and approved a strategic plan for sustainability management in the United Nations system. They undertook to implement organization-specific environmental sustainability management systems, drawing on existing work (e.g., emission reduction strategies) and to endeavour to identify appropriate resources. The senior officials also acknowledged the importance of a common United Nations-wide structure to support the implementation of environmental sustainability management in individual United Nations organizations. The senior officials requested the chair to inform the Secretary-General and the Chief Executives Board about the strategic plan to support the establishment of sustainability management systems in all United Nations organizations.

52. In its decision SS-XII/2, the Governing Council encouraged the Environment Management Group to continue supporting the implementation of the United Nations climate-neutral strategy.

1. Activities for a climate-neutral United Nations

53. The third common greenhouse gas inventory for the United Nations system, *Moving towards a Climate Neutral United Nations*, was published on 22 April 2012. The report included greenhouse gas emissions inventories for 2010 from 54 United Nations organizations, and described their emission reduction efforts in 2011. The data show that the footprint of the United Nations system in 2010 was 1.7 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalent. The UNEP Sustainable United Nations team finalized the United Nations-wide inventory management plan for 2009–2010. Some agencies started work on agency-specific inventory management plans to record in detail how their greenhouse-gas inventories were prepared to ensure full transparency.

54. Issue management group members made steady progress in the preparation of their emission reduction strategies by defining targets and timelines for specific activities. Over 30 United Nations organizations have submitted their draft emission reduction strategies to the Sustainable United Nations team for review. Approval of the organization-specific strategies, and their linking to the United Nations-wide sustainability management strategy, have been at the core of issue management group activities throughout 2012 and will continue to be so in 2013. The help desk service has been maintained to provide issue management group members with training and tailored advice on

inventories, emissions reduction strategies and other issues relevant to the implementation of the United Nations climate-neutral strategy.

2. **Activities on emission reductions and sustainability management**

55. In collaboration with the issue management group and the United Nations inter-agency travel network, the study “Making policies work for sustainable travel” was prepared in May 2012. The study sets out options for rationalizing United Nations travel policies and practices. In close consultation with the issue management group, the sustainable procurement working group of the High-level Committee on Management Procurement Network moved to a new phase of work in which help desk services are being provided on specific tenders by United Nations agencies on demand.

56. The United Nations campaign “Greening the Blue” continued in 2012 and its website received an average of over 13,000 visits per month, compared with 7,000 for 2011. It remains the reference point for United Nations staff to learn what is happening in the United Nations system and how to connect to its processes. In response to a request from United Nations agencies to help bring the issue of environmental sustainability to the attention of managers, a series of interviews was held with some two dozen heads of United Nations organizations to canvass their opinions on the future of United Nations internal sustainability. The report entitled “Visions of a sustainable United Nations in 2020” provides a summary of those interviews. A guidance note on sustainability management systems, illustrating the connections between sustainability management and existing work on emissions reduction, is being prepared.

57. In paragraph 96 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Heads of State and Government called upon the United Nations system to improve the management of facilities and operations, by taking into account sustainable development practices, building on existing efforts, and promoting cost effectiveness. This demonstrates the clear expectations of Member States in matters related to the internal sustainability management of United Nations organizations. In line with those expectations, the Secretary-General has requested a discussion in the Chief Executives Board on sustainability management in the United Nations system in 2013.

58. At their eighteenth meeting, the senior officials considered the proposed arrangements for a continued environmental sustainability management office for the United Nations system. Services in that regard were currently provided by UNEP through its Sustainable United Nations Facility and the related issue management group, and the senior officials agreed that the most cost-effective way forward would be to combine the two mechanisms. The Environment Management Group will inform and seek guidance from the Chief Executives Board at its 2013 session on follow-up to and implementation of the strategic plan for environmental sustainability management and a common environmental sustainability management office. The senior officials also decided to extend the issue management group until the end of 2014, to continue knowledge-sharing, communication, training and awareness-raising activities.

C. **Peer review of environmental profiles of the United Nations system**

59. At their seventeenth meeting, the senior officials considered a proposal from the Chair to explore the establishment of an approach for peer review of the environment portfolio and management procedures among members that could be inspired by the peer review process employed in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The meeting suggested that the approach could be tested on a voluntary basis to gain experience.

60. Accordingly, an options paper on peer reviewing the environmental profile of members of the Environment Management Group¹⁶ was prepared by the Environment Management Group Secretariat with comments from the Group’s members, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNDP, UNEP, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Economic Commission for Europe, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific for consideration at the eighteenth meeting of the senior officials. The paper recognizes that United Nations entities have engaged in a range of activities, including indicators, objectives, guidelines, safeguards, frameworks, strategies and actions, which together provide a solid basis for conducting peer reviews of their environmental sustainability management. It considers that, based on the international experience accumulated thus far, the proposed peer-review mechanism is a resource-efficient tool for providing voluntary participants with non-obligatory recommendations and for the sharing of best practices. The proposed peer-review mechanism is seen as providing significant

¹⁶ EMG/SOM.18/INF/01.

and multiple benefits for the United Nations as a whole and for its individual entities. These benefits include transparency and accountability, consistency and coherence, credibility and exemplarity. The peer-review mechanism is also considered important in promoting the effective attainment of assigned environmental, social and economic sustainability objectives and in ensuring resource efficiency, including cost-savings: in other words, in achieving what is, quite simply, good business.

61. At their eighteenth meeting, the senior officials also welcomed the peer review options paper and requested the further development of the peer-review approach in consultation with the issue management group on environmental sustainability management. They decided to undertake two or three pilot and voluntary peer reviews of agencies with a focus on environmental management, with a view to sharing lessons learned, and to submit a progress report at their next meeting. Three organizations – UNIDO, on behalf of the United Nations entities based in the Vienna International Centre, the World Meteorological Organization and UNEP – expressed interest in serving as the first volunteer agencies for the peer reviews.
