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Policy issues: state of the environment

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

**Joint progress report of the Executive Directors of the United Nations
Human Settlements Programme and the United Nations Environment
Programme**

Note by the Executive Director

The annex to the present note contains the joint progress report of the Executive Directors of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and the United Nations Environment Programme.

* UNEP/GC.25/1.

Annex

Joint progress report of the Executive Directors of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and the United Nations Environment Programme

Activities in respect of the urban environment

Introduction

1. The present report gives an overview of progress made in 2007–2008 to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). It also provides an overview of key activities under this cooperation.

2. In 2007 and 2008, cooperation between UNEP and UN-Habitat has been further expanded and institutionalized. Staff members of the two programmes meet monthly to coordinate their activities and discuss implementation of joint activities. In addition, a new partnership framework was developed during the period 2007–2008, the Partnership Framework 2008–2013, and adopted by senior management of both organizations. As a result, a joint implementation plan for 2008–2009 was agreed that focuses on five key areas:

- (a) Cities and climate change, with a special focus on Africa;
- (b) Ecomobility;
- (c) Waste management (especially in Nairobi);
- (d) Cities: biodiversity and ecosystems;
- (e) Joint outreach activities.

I. Cooperation between UNEP and UN-Habitat

3. The role of cities in climate change is an increasing focus of attention, given that cities are a major contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time urban residents are severely affected by climate change, especially in developing countries, for example through the destruction of housing and basic services and health threats. Cities must play a major role in any global initiative if it is to succeed. Their practical action on the ground is essential to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and to protecting their citizens from the effects of climate change.

4. Tackling climate change is linked to building more sustainable livelihoods and improving citizens' well-being. Thus the climate change agenda and the urban environment agenda overlap: better air quality, sustainable use of ecosystems, cleaner energy, improved water and waste management, chemicals, better flood systems, all have local and global benefits. The challenge is to develop cities that use environmental goods and services sustainably, both within their boundaries and immediate surroundings and globally.

5. Recognizing this, UN-Habitat and UNEP, the only two United Nations bodies headquartered in a developing country and with complementary mandates in the fields of sustainable urban development and the global environment, have a history of continued cooperation spanning over 20 years. While UNEP concentrates on mainstreaming urban environmental concerns into policy development at the global and national levels, UN-Habitat promotes sustainable urban planning and management at the local and national levels. An important task is to integrate the urban environmental perspective into the work of both programmes.

6. The two agencies are intensifying their cooperation to provide a better and wider range of services to local and national governments in the field of the urban environment. The aim is to enable cities better to assess and prioritize local environmental concerns and to have a voice in national and global environmental debate, particularly in areas such as climate change, land-based sources of marine pollution and the use of ecosystems. Helping countries and cities to implement global norms, agreements and conventions will allow them to link global concerns to local issues.

7. In 2007, UN-Habitat and UNEP developed the Partnership Framework 2008–2013. The Framework was developed in close consultation with clients and partners and indicates how the two agencies plan, within their mandates, to strengthen their cooperation. Focus areas include providing cities with technical assistance and tools on environmental planning and management and urban environmental issues (air pollution, transport, energy, water and sanitation); promoting linkages between local and global issues; providing technical support and capacity-building to local and national governments on global environmental challenges and providing support to local governments on environmental assessments and other issues.

The overall goal of the cooperation between UNEP and UN-Habitat is to mainstream the environmental perspective into local, national and global urban policymaking, to incorporate urban perspectives into environmental policymaking at the global, national and local levels and to highlight the local-global linkages of environmental issues.

8. UNEP and UN-Habitat meet monthly to coordinate their cooperation through a body known as the Joint Operation and Coordination Group. The Group has been given the mandate to coordinate the development of the Partnership Framework and is the primary vehicle for overseeing the implementation of joint activities. It comprises the staff of the Urban Environment Unit of UNEP and the Urban Environmental Planning Branch of UN-Habitat and other staff from UNEP and UN-Habitat that are working on joint activities. The Deputy Executive Directors provide strategic direction and guidance to the Group.

II. Joint activities 2007–2008

A. Activities

9. For the 2007–2008 biennium the two urban environment sections jointly developed implementation plans. In mid-2008, after completion of the Partnership Framework, a fully joint implementation plan was developed for 2008–2009. Activities in the plan focus on five areas: cities and climate change, sustainable urban transport, integrated waste management, urban biodiversity and ecosystems and outreach activities.

1. Cities and climate change

10. UNEP and UN-Habitat concluded a tripartite memorandum of understanding with ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, a major subject of which is cooperation between the three organizations on the issue of cities and climate change and support for the ICLEI Cities for Climate Protection programme.

11. UNEP and ICLEI, with the close involvement of UN-Habitat, organized an event for local governments entitled “Local Action – Local Solutions” at the United Nations climate change conference that took place in Bali, Indonesia, in December 2007. The two-day event brought together some 150 participants from local, national and global organizations and Governments to discuss the role of cities in respect of climate change and the United Nations process for responding to it, including in particular the Kyoto Protocol. The conference provided recommendations on the role of cities to the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and agreed on a “Roadmap from Bali to Copenhagen”.

12. UN-Habitat and UNEP jointly organized a side event at the fourth session of the World Urban Forum in Nanjing, China, on 4 November 2008, entitled “Cities climate change: the roadmap from Bali to Copenhagen”. The side event was very well attended and helped cities and city representative organizations to develop positions for the United Nations climate change conferences to be held in Poznan, Poland, and Copenhagen in December 2008 and December 2009, respectively.

13. UNEP and UN-Habitat supported “Local Government Climate Sessions” from 9 to 11 December in Poznan during the fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Prior to that, UNEP and UN-Habitat worked with ICLEI at a meeting in Geneva to develop the position of local governments for that fourteenth session. UNEP and UN-Habitat participated in several United Nations system events in

Poznan, including a panel of chief executives of United Nations organizations and agencies that focused on the theme “Acting on Climate Change: The United Nations Delivering as One”.

14. UN-Habitat, with the involvement of UNEP, organized a two-day expert workshop in Nairobi on 22 and 23 November 2007 to discuss with experts and city representatives the possible role of UN-Habitat with regard to climate change. The outcome of the workshop allowed UN-Habitat to develop its strategy on climate change.

15. UN-Habitat, with support from UNEP, worked with ICLEI to develop a “Climate Action Handbook”, a resource guide offering local governments, particularly in developing countries, policies, tools and best practices to allow them to engage in climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.

16. The UN-Habitat Shelter Branch is working closely with the UNEP Sustainable Buildings and Construction Initiative on promoting sustainable buildings and construction, in particular in respect of carbon trading and low-cost sustainable housing materials and building technologies in developing countries. Discussions are currently focused on developing a benchmark and indexes to describe building construction processes for climate change mitigation. UN-Habitat participated in the Initiative annual meeting (Madrid, 2–4 December 2008) during which a joint plan for action on cities and sustainable buildings was discussed. UN-Habitat and UNEP are also planning a joint expert group meeting to discuss the specific issues of cities in developing countries in promoting sustainable buildings.

2. Sustainable urban transport

17. The Global Alliance for Ecomobility, a cross-sectoral partnership for the integrated promotion of walking, cycling and wheeling with links to the public transport, private automobile, housing and service sectors, aims at reducing people’s dependency on private automobiles. It was launched at the United Nations climate change conference held in Bali in December 2007. Both UNEP and UN-Habitat are founding members of the Alliance and were closely involved in the design and launch of this global initiative.

18. UNEP and the FIA Foundation for the Automobile and Society have launched the global “Make Roads Safe” campaign to improve the way in which roads are planned, financed and built, through the allocation of a percentage (10 per cent) of road building funds to road facilities for non-motorized transport. Under the Global Alliance for Ecomobility, UNEP, with support from UN-Habitat, will facilitate a working group on the campaign, encouraging inputs from interested members of the Global Alliance.

3. Integrated waste management

19. UNEP and UN-Habitat have agreed that at least one joint activity on integrated waste management should be undertaken in Nairobi. At the request of the Kenyan Government, UNEP, in close coordination with UN-Habitat, is assisting the City Council of Nairobi to prepare an integrated solid waste management plan for Nairobi. The plan will provide for the scientific assessment of the character and quantity of the city’s waste, will provide projections on future waste and will assess the current waste management system. It will also recommend appropriate environmentally sound technologies and a policy framework for each component of integrated solid waste management. The first steps of the plan have been implemented; the project is expected to be completed by late 2009 or early 2010. Stakeholder consultations will be carried out at each stage of the plan’s preparation. The outcomes will be disseminated at the regional and national levels to support the plan’s replication.

4. Urban biodiversity and ecosystems

20. UNEP and UN-Habitat have jointly supported initiatives on urban biodiversity and ecosystems. In March 2007, in Curitiba, Brazil, mayors from all over the world gathered to discuss the role of cities in achieving the target of significantly reducing the loss of biodiversity by 2010. The mayors exchanged experiences and best practices and agreed on areas of collaboration for the sustainable use of biodiversity and for achieving the target. They also adopted a declaration in which they emphasized the need to raise public awareness and disseminate best practices and lessons learned.

21. As one outcome of the meeting, UNEP was requested, in collaboration with UN-Habitat and ICLEI, to compile case studies from around the world on cities, ecosystems and biodiversity. The case studies, collected in the “Local Action for Biodiversity Cities and Biodiversity Case Series”, were launched at the Mayors Conference on Local Action for Biodiversity, held in May 2008, in Bonn, Germany, prior to the high-level segment of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. In addition, UNEP and UN-Habitat supported the Mayors’

Position, presented at the ninth session, that resulted in a decision by the Conference of the Parties on cities, local authorities and biodiversity.

22. Lastly, UN-Habitat and UNEP jointly take part in the Global Partnership on Cities and Biodiversity to provide an umbrella for activities on cities and biodiversity.

5. Outreach activities

23. UN-Habitat and UNEP publish a joint urban environment newsletter that is distributed to a network of cities and partner institutions, regional offices and other interested parties. Four editions were published during the reporting period, covering the themes “Increased UNEP/UN-Habitat cooperation”, “Cities and biodiversity”, “Climate change” and “Harmonious cities”. Another joint publication, the *Liveable Cities Report*, developed with the Cities Alliance and ICLEI, was launched in Bali during the local government session that was held in parallel with the meetings of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. UNEP took the lead in a publication prepared jointly with UN-Habitat and ICLEI called “Tales of two cities: Partnerships for Urban Sustainability”, while UN-Habitat is coordinating an “ecoBudget” guide for cities in developing countries, to be launched in early 2009. Joint UNEP/UN-Habitat publications are available online at www.unhabitat.org/scp and www.unep.org/urban_environment.

24. In 2008, UNEP and UN-Habitat, in conjunction with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, worked to produce a report entitled “The State of African Cities 2008: a framework for addressing urban challenges in Africa”. The report looks at trends in urban growth, productivity, governance and environmental sustainability and was launched during the fourth session of the World Urban Forum, in Nanjing, China, in November 2008. The first report on the state of Asian cities is currently being prepared as a complement to the UN-Habitat *State of the World's Cities* report. It looks at the biennium 2008–2009 and focuses on the theme of harmonious urbanization.

25. UNEP and UN-Habitat presented their joint efforts at a number of events, such as the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and meetings of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, the World Cities Summit held in Singapore and the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, through presentations, the distribution of publications and exhibitions. The fourth session of the UN-Habitat World Urban Forum took place in Nanjing, China, from 3 to 6 November 2008. UNEP supported UN-Habitat in the organization of one of the six dialogue sessions, entitled “Harmonizing the Built and Natural Environments”. Selected cities presented innovative ways of preventing and mitigating the adverse effects of climate change and biodiversity loss, using means that include the urban poor. Other joint activities at the session included an exhibition featuring the publications of both agencies on urban environment.

B. Partnerships

26. In 1996, UN-Habitat and UNEP launched the Sustainable Cities Programme, which has become one of the leading global programmes to help cities to integrate environmental issues in urban planning and development. The Sustainable Cities Programme uses the environmental planning and management approach, which is aimed at building capacity among local authorities and local stakeholders. During the period 2007–2008 the programme provided technical cooperation in an additional 64 municipalities and 5 countries, bringing the total to 144 active municipalities in 26 countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia.

27. UN-Habitat and UNEP also cooperate in several United Nations inter-agency bodies such as the United Nations mechanism for inter-agency coordination on water resources, UN Energy and the Environment Management Group. Significant collective efforts have been made through several Environment Management Group meetings to use this system-wide mechanism for cooperation in such areas as a carbon-neutral United Nations, biodiversity targets and land issues. Lastly, UN-Habitat and UNEP have proposed to host a 2009 inter-agency support group meeting during the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues meeting that will be held sometime during the year, in Nairobi.

28. UNEP and UN-Habitat have committed themselves to implementing the United Nations climate neutral strategy and will continue to coordinate their efforts in this area. UNEP set the goal of becoming climate neutral by 1 January 2008 and UN-Habitat is planning to become climate neutral by 1 January 2009. UNEP has developed tools to calculate the greenhouse gas emissions from air travel and office operations for use by the entire United Nations system (available online at www.unemg.org). Greening the United Nations compound at Gigiri in Nairobi is linked to the climate neutrality process since

coverage includes energy use, facilities operations, waste management, resource efficiency and office culture.

29. UNEP and UN-Habitat are both members of the Cities Alliance, a global coalition of cities and their development partners, and cooperate closely in the Cities Alliance Consultative Group and through joint projects. Since 2007, UNEP and Cities Alliance, with support from UN-Habitat, have been working to develop a tool to assist cities to integrate the environment into city development strategies, including aspects related to reducing the impact of climate change

30. ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability is an international association of local governments that have made a commitment to sustainable development. As already mentioned, UNEP, UN-Habitat and ICLEI signed a tripartite memorandum of understanding in May 2006 under which they work together on the role of cities in global environmental issues and city-to-city cooperation. UNEP, UN-Habitat and ICLEI have cooperated on many events and publications (as detailed in the present report). In October 2008, ICLEI and UNEP signed a new agreement to strengthen their cooperation further, including in the areas of climate change, urban transport, sustainable urban development and the closer involvement of mayors' networks in the work of UNEP. It is expected that UN-Habitat will join in the implementation of several of these activities.

C. Regional highlights

1. Africa: Nairobi River Basin Programme (NRBP) - Phase III

31. Since 2005, UNEP and UN-Habitat have worked together on the Nairobi River Basin Programme Phase III, a fully-fledged multi-million dollar programme scheduled to run for four years. The two organizations, together with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) agreed on a collaborative framework, which facilitated a stakeholder-driven process and involved the Government of Kenya and other key players. Outcomes of the programme include a social and economic analysis; an analysis of human settlement patterns and trends and the spatial distribution of infrastructure, social services and physical/natural features within the Nairobi River Basin; the establishment of the Environmental Management Information System for the Nairobi River Basin within the Nairobi City Council and the implementation of a demonstration project using the Environmental Planning and Management approach.

2. Asia and the Pacific: strengthening the Philippines' institutional capacity to adapt to climate change

32. In the Philippines, UNEP and UN-Habitat are involved in the implementation of a joint programme funded through the Spanish Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund. Signed in August 2008, the three-year programme aim to achieve: the mainstreaming of climate risk reduction into key national and selected local development plans; enhanced national and local capacity to develop, manage and administer plans, programmes and projects addressing climate change risks; and the improvement of coping mechanisms through pilot demonstration adaptation projects.

33. UNEP, together with UNDP and the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations as the main executing agencies, provide technical inputs so that the programme is able to draw on cutting edge developments emanating from scientific research and best practices from around the world. UN-Habitat is implementing one of the pilot projects under the programme: "Designing and Building with Nature: Showcasing a Climate Change Resilient Human Settlement in Sorsogon City", which will demonstrate the design and development of a model urban community featuring the appropriate social infrastructure.

3. Latin America and the Caribbean: "Urban Environment Strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean"

34. The project "Urban Environment Strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean", jointly developed by the regional offices of UNEP and UN-Habitat, has provided a solid support framework that has strengthened the reach and relevance of the Global Environment Outlook (GEO) Cities initiative of UNEP in the region. Joint urban environmental assessments (GEO Cities) are being prepared, to be followed by Local Agenda 21 action plans and proposals for response projects.

35. As a result of this collaboration, the Cuban team has replicated the achievement by the city of Cienfuegos by preparing GEO Cities reports for two other cities: Holguín and Santa Clara. Loja and Esmeraldas in Ecuador use their GEO reports as important tools for environmental planning and decision-making. In Arequipa, Peru, the team developed action plans and an environmental information system for the city. In Chiclayo, Peru, the GEO Cities process resulted in a waste action plan.

Additional GEO Cities reports have been launched for Lima-Callao, Peru, and the greater metropolitan area of Costa Rica and are under way in five more cities (Ponta Porã, Marabá, Beberibe and Piranhas in Brazil and Cartagena in Colombia).

36. UNEP and UN-Habitat regional offices are discussing new initiatives to incorporate climate change vulnerability, adaptation and mitigation issues into the preparation of urban environmental profiles for cities.

III. Future cooperation

37. The focus of cooperation in future years will be on implementing the Partnership Framework 2008–2013, in particular the joint implementation plan for 2008–2009. This plan includes five activities/areas:

- (a) Cities and climate change, with a special focus on Africa;
- (b) Global Alliance for EcoMobility, in particular support for infrastructure for non-motorized transport;
- (c) Improving solid waste management in Nairobi;
- (d) Promoting urban biodiversity and ecosystems;
- (e) Joint outreach activities.

38. The role of cities in climate change will be heavily emphasized. UN-Habitat provides direct support to cities to address climate change through the Sustainable Urban Development Network, and more specifically the Cities in Climate Change Initiative. Planned activities will include organizing partner meetings, publishing good practices and developing climate change training and knowledge products for local decision-makers and planners. The project will be executed in close cooperation with UNEP.

39. UNEP will continue to highlight the important role that cities play at the global, national and local levels in tackling climate change. With support from UN-Habitat, UNEP will continue to support city networks, such as ICLEI, to promote their role in addressing climate change, including through a mayors' conference prior to and during the local government climate sessions that are scheduled for the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, due to take place in Copenhagen in 2009.

40. New efforts will also be made to support cities in developing countries to adapt to climate change. For instance, linkages will be strengthened with UNDP to work jointly to support capacity-building at the subnational level. UNEP and UN-Habitat are ideally suited to address the linkages between adaptation plans and initiatives at the global and national levels with those at the local level.