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Emerging policy issues: environment in the multilateral system

**Enhanced coordination across the United Nations system,
including the Environment Management Group: implementation
of the revised memorandum of understanding between the
United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations
Environment Programme**

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 35 of decision 25/1 VI of 20 February 2009, by which the Governing Council requested the Executive Director to present a report on the implementation of the revised memorandum of understanding between the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Environment Programme to it at its next special session. The report also includes the UNEP contribution to United Nations programming guidance and its direct engagement with the United Nations system at the country level and what is known as the “Delivering as one” initiative.

In the context of enhanced coordination across the United Nations system, the present report also provides relevant information with regard to the request by the Council in the same decision for the Executive Director to invite the Environment Management Group to promote cooperation across the United Nations system to assist Member States in implementing the international environmental agenda, including through consideration of joint approaches to addressing environmental challenges of United Nations system-wide significance.

* UNEP/GCSS.XI/1.

I. Suggested actions

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

The Governing Council,

Recalling decision 25/1 VI of 20 February 2009 on enhanced coordination across the United Nations system, including the Environment Management Group,

Welcoming the progress report by the Environment Management Group presented by the Executive Director¹ and the Group's progress in facilitating cooperation across the United Nations system to assist Member States in implementing the environmental agenda,

1. *Takes note* of the above-mentioned report by the Executive Director on the implementation of the revised memorandum of understanding between the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Environment Programme, including the contribution to what is known as the "Delivering as one" initiative;

2. *Encourages* the Environment Management Group to continue its cooperation, including by working with the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and its subsidiary bodies, in enhancing the sustainability of management practices in the United Nations system and coherence in programming environmental activities in the United Nations system, including for mainstreaming environmental concerns into sectoral programmes, and coherence in mainstreaming environmental considerations in operational activities at the country level in the United Nations system.

1 UNEP/GCSS.XI/3.

II. Implementation of the revised memorandum of understanding between the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Environment Programme

2. The revised memorandum of understanding between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was signed in December 2008. It is a significant advance on the earlier memorandum of understanding in that its intent is to achieve deeper cooperation between the two agencies, including via joint programming. It is fully in the spirit of United Nations reform and provides the appropriate framework for UNEP and UNDP to demonstrate their commitment to such reform. Its purpose is to encourage deeper collaboration consistent with the organizations' respective mandates and comparative advantages. It contains sections on administrative services, reimbursable support service arrangements and programme implementation. The paragraphs on administration include such issues as cost recovery and the provision of office space. The programmatic paragraphs mention, among other things, that substantive areas for cooperation and the methods through which they will be realized will be elaborated by a joint working group.

3. The memorandum of understanding states that areas of cooperation may include climate change, the UNDP-UNEP Poverty and Environment Initiative and other environmental endeavours, such as the implementation of Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building, the multilateral environmental agreements and other agreements to attain the Millennium Development Goals.

4. The significant cooperation on a range of projects and activities between UNDP and UNEP dates back many years. The recent draft inventory of UNDP-UNEP cooperation makes clear the high number of projects and activities on which UNDP and UNEP are cooperating. It is recognized, however, that there remains insufficient programmatic coherence in this cooperation, including in terms of respective agency mandates and comparative advantages.

5. The two agencies have recently agreed on the way forward for the implementation of the memorandum of understanding. In that regard, the joint working group referred to under paragraph 4.4 of the memorandum will be established and made operational. In addition, the two agencies have reached agreement on cooperation in the climate change field. Key areas will be in the area of capacity development for climate change adaptation and the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD), which is implemented by UNDP, UNEP and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. A further recommended area for deeper cooperation is in environmental mainstreaming, which is a priority for both agencies. Deeper cooperation between UNEP and UNDP regional offices, including through the United Nations regional directors' teams, will also be a priority.

6. Overall, UNEP has been active in United Nations country coherence efforts and has increasingly contributed to United Nations programming guidance and direct engagement with the United Nations system at the country level. UNEP has engaged in what is known as the "Delivering as one" process since 2007 and its work involves three main components:

(a) Capacity-building in UNEP through training in United Nations country programming and strengthening the capacity of regional offices for country-level engagement;

(b) Direct engagement with United Nations regional directors' teams and United Nations country teams in developing common country assessments and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks in the eight "one United Nations" pilot countries and in more than 30 countries to review their Frameworks in 2008 and 2009:

(i) Participating in country-level inter-agency thematic working groups and contributing to the drafting of the Framework results matrix. UNEP is chairing or co-chairing the United Nations country team thematic working group on environment in Albania, China, Indonesia, Myanmar and Rwanda. UNEP has also integrated the green economy initiative into the Frameworks for Azerbaijan, Cambodia and China;

(ii) Providing environmental data and information to strengthen the United Nations country analysis of key national development issues, for example, in Cambodia, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Haiti, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Rwanda and Uruguay;

- (iii) Participating in 14 joint programmes out of 17 approved programme concepts under the environment and climate change window of the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund;
- (iv) Contributing to the delivery of specific Framework outputs, such as the integration of climate change into national policies, the development of a plan for the implementation of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants in Brazil and the updating of environmental legislation in Cape Verde;
- (v) Delivering training courses on environmental sustainability for United Nations staff in China and Indonesia;
- (vi) Developing outreach initiatives jointly with other United Nations agencies, such as DeVerVerde, a film festival covering the environment and cultural diversity, which toured more than 30 towns in Uruguay and was attended by some 10,000 people, including public schoolchildren in urban and rural areas;

(c) Developing tools and resources to support United Nations country teams in mainstreaming environmental sustainability in common country assessments and Frameworks in cooperation with the United Nations System Staff College and other agencies within the United Nations Development Group. UNEP co-chairs the Development Group's task team on environmental sustainability and climate change, which produced a guidance note on mainstreaming environmental sustainability in country analysis and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework that was endorsed by the Development Group in October 2009. It is also developing a guidance note on climate change for United Nations country teams. Both guidance notes incorporate the need to consider the multilateral environmental agreements in United Nations country programming.

7. Engagement by UNEP in common country assessments and Frameworks is strongly linked to the work of the UNDP-UNEP Poverty and Environment Initiative, given that any environmental sustainability elements captured in poverty reduction strategies influence the Frameworks.

III. Report of the Environment Management Group

8. By its decision 25/1 VI of 20 February 2009, the UNEP Governing Council welcomed the Environmental Management Group's efforts in promoting cooperation across the United Nations system on environmental activities.² The Council requested the Executive Director to invite the Group to promote cooperation across the United Nations system to assist Member States in implementing the international environmental agenda.

9. The Executive Director is working with Group members to respond to the Council's expectations and request. The work includes an agreement, for the first time, on a workplan for the coming 12 months. The plan is organized according to four work areas: overall cooperation; sustainable management issues; programmatic issues; and operational issues.³ The Group's achievements and planned work is reported below in accordance with the expected accomplishments of the approved workplan. The work is relevant to the three themes of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum: international environmental governance and sustainable development", "green economy" and "biodiversity and ecosystems".

A. Strengthened cooperation among Group members in setting a common agenda, implementing joint initiatives and reporting on progress

10. Group members are working together to set a common agenda, identify new issues and implement joint initiatives and reporting on progress. The fifteenth meeting of the senior officials of the Environment Management Group was hosted by the United Nations Development Programme on the margins of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly, in New York, on 23 September 2009. The meeting was co-chaired by Mr. Achim Steiner, Executive Director, UNEP, and Chair of the Group and

² In so doing it explicitly referred to increased attention to environmental processes under the three Rio conventions and support provided to moving the United Nations system towards climate neutrality, the 10-year plan and framework to enhance the implementation of on the Convention to Combat Desertification and the 2010 biodiversity target process.

³ See the report of the fifteenth meeting of the senior officials of the Environment Management Group (EMG/SOM.15/02), available on the website <http://www.unemg.org>.

Ms. Helen Clark, Administrator, UNDP. The meeting, conducted in the form of a technical segment and a senior officials segment, was attended by representatives of 27 member agencies. The senior officials considered an agenda set in accordance with prior consultations and agreed on a set of actions, including the approval of an annual workplan.⁴ This action tallies with a recommendation by the Office of Internal Oversight Services.⁵ They also considered ways of strengthening further such a workplan through a costed approach, among other things.

B. Enhanced sustainability of management practices in the United Nations system

11. The Group has advanced the United Nations agenda on moving towards a climate-neutral United Nations and sustainable procurement in the Organization. In considering the achievements reported below, the senior officials agreed to consolidate the work of the issue management groups on a climate-neutral United Nations and on sustainable procurement under a single group on sustainable management in the United Nations system. Their guidance with regard to the work is set out below.

1. Moving towards climate neutrality

12. In October 2007, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination endorsed a statement on moving towards a climate-neutral United Nations, in which the heads of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes agreed that by 2009 they would estimate greenhouse-gas emissions, undertake efforts to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions to the extent possible and analyse the cost implications and explore budgetary modalities – including consulting governing bodies as needed – of purchasing carbon offsets with the aim of eventually reaching climate neutrality.

13. The Environment Management Group secretariat and the UNEP Sustainable United Nations facility have been supporting the United Nations system in these efforts. In particular, the following has been achieved:

(a) A network of climate-neutral focal points and a knowledge-sharing website, which also serves as a platform for exchanging experiences,⁶ has been established throughout the United Nations system to implement the move towards climate neutrality in a coordinated manner;

(b) A common methodology for calculating greenhouse-gas emissions has been developed, with a minimum agreed boundary for the United Nations footprint, supported by common tools for calculating such emissions (the United Nations greenhouse gas calculator and the United Nations interface to the International Civil Aviation Organization carbon emissions calculator), training and the provision of a helpdesk;

(c) Guidelines have been developed on how to achieve emissions reductions (green meetings, energy efficiency in buildings and a quick guide on emissions reductions, among other things) together with a common administrative approach for the procurement of carbon offsets for those agencies in a position to do so.

14. A comprehensive report on United Nations system activities to move towards climate neutrality was made available on the margins of the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in December 2009 in Copenhagen.⁷ This report was based on inventories and other information on implementing the climate-neutral commitment submitted by Environment Management Group members.

15. At their fourteenth meeting the senior officials of the Environment Management Group noted that the climate change effects of emissions of gases from aviation other than carbon dioxide were uncertain. They accordingly decided to take into account only the effects of carbon dioxide for the time being. The International Civil Aviation Organization and UNEP have been invited to convene a meeting

4 Ibid.

5 Evaluation by the Office of Internal Oversight Services of the implementation by the Environment Management Group secretariat of the Secretary-General's commitment to move the United Nations towards climate neutrality of 2 June (Assignment No. IED-09-002), page 33.

6 <http://www.unemg.org/climateneutralun/>

7 <http://www.unemg.org/sustainableun/UNperformance/2008Greenhousegasemissions/tabid/2010/language/fr-FR/Default.aspx>

of experts to be identified based on, among other things, recommendations of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which will aim to provide further guidance on the question of an appropriate metric to account for all greenhouse-gas effects from aviation.

16. An evaluation was carried out by the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the implementation by the Environment Management Group secretariat of the Secretary-General's commitment to move the United Nations towards climate neutrality. The report makes nine recommendations (variously directed to UNEP, the secretariat and the Secretary-General) aimed at improving support for the climate-neutral commitment and its implementation within the Environment Management Group secretariat. It stresses, among other things, the need to resolve pending methodological issues related to greenhouse-gas inventories, to focus on reducing emissions, including from travel – the largest source of United Nations emissions – and the need for engagement by management to formulate a clear strategy and assign responsibility for achieving results.

17. While the United Nations system has achieved significant progress and outstanding contributions have been made to common efforts by individual members of the Environment Management Group, the move towards climate neutrality will require continuing work in the United Nations system, a finding expressed both by the issue management group and the Office of Internal Oversight Services. This reflects the scale of the challenge and the experience of some Environment Management Group members, such as the World Bank, that have been working on climate neutrality for some years.

2. Sustainable procurement

18. The Environment Management Group established an issue management group on sustainable procurement in 2007 and requested it to undertake its work in full cooperation with the procurement network of the High-level Committee on Management. In response, close collaboration has been established with the Committee's procurement network, which has served as the issue management group on sustainable procurement, with the following outcomes:

(a) Sustainable procurement has been adopted as one of the continuing areas of work in the procurement network's strategy of harmonizing United Nations rules. The network's work has been undertaken with the support of the UNEP Sustainable United Nations facility;

(b) Tools, guidelines, resource books and case studies have been made available on the internet, including on the portal for United Nations Global Marketplace procurement practitioners and suppliers, for use by United Nations procurement practitioners and requisitioners;⁸

(c) Training, including through a modular training course on sustainable procurement, has been developed, with online training material available in English and French, and ad hoc assistance has been provided to United Nations agencies on sustainable procurement-related matters (such as advice for tenders and sustainable procurement policy development).

19. Collaborative efforts have also supported the preparation of a report by the Secretary-General, facilitated by the United Nations Procurement Division, on sustainable procurement in response to a specific request from the General Assembly. The report⁹ provides information on the concept of sustainable procurement, related criteria and its impact in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. Further work on sustainable procurement will be informed and structured in accordance with the report and the outcome of the General Assembly's consideration thereof.

⁸ www.unep.fr/scp/sun and www.ungm.org/sustainableprocurement. Tools include: a United Nations guide for procurement practitioners and facility managers on sustainable lighting; five product guidelines for United Nations procurement practitioners (on information and communications technology, furniture, cleaning products and services, paper and stationery products and vehicles), with five more planned for development by the end of 2009; a green meetings guide (in collaboration with the International Annual Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications); a United Nations procurement resource book for ecolabels (in collaboration with the United Nations Office of Project Services); seven case studies on existing sustainable procurement work in United Nations agencies; a United Nations sustainable procurement guide, to be finalized in October 2009.

⁹ Comprehensive report on United Nations procurement activities: report of the Secretary-General: addendum: sustainable procurement (A/64/284/Add.2).

3. Coherent approach to sustainable management in the United Nations

20. At their fifteenth meeting the senior officials of the Environment Management Group stressed that efforts related to greening the United Nations, such as through sustainable procurement, must be anchored in intergovernmental processes and in the United Nations system's internal management and operational structures. The need to provide capacity-building for developing-country providers in terms of sustainable procurement was highlighted, given the implications for suppliers of the goods and services covered by the sustainable procurement guidelines. Related issues of efficiency and a low-carbon economy were also raised.

21. The senior officials decided to consolidate the work of the issue management groups on a climate-neutral United Nations and on sustainable procurement under a single issue management group on sustainable management in the United Nations system for a period of two years. They welcomed the support of the UNEP Sustainable United Nations facility for the group's work and requested the group to build on and enhance the cooperation under way with the High-level Committee on Management and the United Nations Development Group and to build on the Committee's work on facility management, procurement, information and communications technology, travel, finance and budget, including by:

(a) Facilitating continued cooperation between Environment Management Group members on implementing the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination statement on moving towards a climate-neutral United Nations, in particular by:

- (i) Facilitating a common methodology for greenhouse-gas inventories and tracking performance through an online reporting and monitoring system with appropriate linkages to enterprise resource-based planning systems;
- (ii) Facilitating the development of individual emissions reduction strategies for each organization by the end of 2010, including for travel, in addition to a common approach on emissions reductions throughout the United Nations system;
- (iii) Exploring modalities for the common purchase of offsets;

(b) Developing, in cooperation with the procurement network of the High-Level Committee on Management, support services for integrating sustainable procurement practices in the United Nations system in line with a common definition and approach by the United Nations,¹⁰ including by:

- (i) Promoting training for requisitioners and procurement practitioners and finalizing an online training module;
- (ii) Documenting success stories and good practices related to sustainable procurement from within the United Nations system;
- (iii) Continuing the development of sustainable procurement practical tools such as product guidelines;
- (iv) Updating the section of the United Nations procurement practitioner's handbook on sustainable procurement;
- (v) Promoting awareness on sustainability for the business community through business seminars in collaboration with the United Nations Global Compact;

(c) Exploring how sustainable management in the United Nations system can be developed, including by identifying options for developing sustainable management systems as an integral part of enterprise resource-based planning systems.

C. Enhanced coherence in programming environmental activities in the United Nations system, including for mainstreaming environmental concerns into sectoral programmes

22. The Environment Management Group has over the past year initiated work related to enhancing the coherence of environmental activities in the United Nations system, including for mainstreaming environmental concerns into sectoral programmes. These processes focus on the post-2010 biodiversity

10 Ibid.

targets, land issues in the United Nations system and making the transition towards a green economy, as set out below.

1. Supporting the post-2010 biodiversity target process

23. At their fourteenth meeting the senior officials of the Environment Management Group considered a proposal by the then Presidency of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity that the Group should contribute to the celebration of the International Year of Biodiversity, the deliberations at the General Assembly special session in 2010 and the process under the Convention for formulating post-2010 biodiversity strategy and targets.¹¹

24. The Chair of the Group convened technical consultations in Nairobi in February 2009 to discuss what and how it would contribute to the post-2010 biodiversity targets process.¹² In line with the agreement reached during those consultations the Chair wrote to Group members suggesting the establishment of an issue management group on post-2010 biodiversity targets. That group comprised nominated focal points from agencies and observers from the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and selected biodiversity experts.

25. At its first meeting, which was hosted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in Paris on 8 April 2009, the issue management group agreed to submit its contribution in the form of a report on the United Nations system's contribution to the formulation of the post-2010 biodiversity targets. It agreed on the scope, structure and modalities of the work to be undertaken, including a workplan, an outline of the report, a template for gathering information, guidance for submissions and the structure of a web-based workspace for the group.¹³ It also agreed that the report would include:

- (a) Presentation of the biodiversity aspects of strategies, programmes, plans and initiatives of individual members;
- (b) A United Nations system-wide perspective on the post-2010 biodiversity target process;
- (c) Selected areas in which collaborative programmes and initiatives were under way and the identification of areas that might warrant further cooperation.

26. Issue management group focal points provided inputs to the web-based post-2010 biodiversity targets survey template on their accomplishments in contributing to the implementation of the post-2010 biodiversity targets and proposals for sectoral objectives, targets and indicators (i.e., their inputs related to their respective mandates). A core writing team of the issue management group comprising representatives of key biodiversity agencies and multilateral environmental agreements was established to begin compiling and writing the report based on information gathered and analysed by group members. The UNEP World Conservation and Monitoring Centre was contracted by the Group secretariat to provide technical support to the issue management group in preparing the report.

27. At their fifteenth meeting the senior officials authorized the issue management group to conclude its report, which was to be submitted by the Chair of the Environment Management Group to the Convention on Biological Diversity process for the formulation of the 2010 targets. The process includes the fourteenth meeting of the Convention's Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice and the third meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Review of Implementation of the Convention, which will take place in May 2010. The officials also agreed that the final report should be presented at the special session on biodiversity of the General Assembly and the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, in 2010.

2. Land issues in the United Nations system

28. At their fourteenth meeting the senior officials of the Environment Management Group considered a proposal by the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, to identify

11 See the report of the fourteenth meeting of senior officials (EMG/SOM.14/02) on <http://www.unemg.org>.

12 See the report of the Environment Management Group technical meeting, Nairobi, February 2009 (EMG/TM-1/02) on <http://www.unemg.org>.

13 See the report of the first meeting of the issue management group (EMG/IMG2010-1/09) on <http://www.unemg.org>.

a coherent United Nations system-wide response to the implementation of the Convention's 10-year strategic plan.¹⁴ The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, at its seventeenth session, the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, at its twenty-fifth session, and the General Assembly have also adopted decisions and resolutions calling upon the United Nations system to devise a coherent approach to desertification and land degradation issues.

29. The Group accordingly agreed to hold a series of technical consultations, notably a technical meeting in Nairobi in February 2009 and an informal consultation meeting on land issues in April 2009 in New York, to define modalities and deliverables for a United Nations system-wide network and process on sustainable land use in the framework of the Group. During these consultations the agencies' individual and joint activities and frameworks, programmatic links with the Convention to Combat Desertification strategic plan and the scientific and political rationale for a collective process on land under the Group were reviewed. A set of significant and urgent land issues that could both benefit from issue-based and focused cooperation and support accelerated implementation of the 10-year strategy was identified. Strategic views, follow-up recommendations and a suggested plan of work for the Group on land were suggested and are set out in the report of the consultation meeting.¹⁵

30. At their fifteenth meeting the senior officials decided, in follow-up to the recommendations emanating from the consultations, to establish an issue management group for a period of two years. The group should propose options for a coherent United Nations system-wide contribution to land challenges, including the implementation of the 10-year strategic plan. They also requested the group to prepare a United Nations system-wide rapid response report on drylands, highlighting the importance of drylands to key emerging issues on the global agenda, including climate change, food security and human settlements, together with options for follow-up action, for their consideration at their sixteenth meeting. A side event was held on the margins of the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification to explore further the next steps in the process with agencies, partners from the private sector and the scientific and policymaking community.

3. Making the transition towards a green economy in the context of global environmental change

31. The concerns over unprecedented environmental changes and their potentially negative implications for economic and social development were acknowledged at the fifteenth meeting of the senior officials, where the officials said that the United Nations system needed to be adaptive and coherent in its response to meeting Member States' needs in that regard. The concept of making a transition to the green economy was seen as a response to environmental change and a pathway towards economic recovery and sustainable development, which needed to be integrated into various sectors of society, beyond the financial and economic sectors.

32. The senior officials welcomed the work of the United Nations Development Group on preparing a guidance note for United Nations country teams and implementing partners on mainstreaming environmental sustainability in country analysis and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework. They recalled the United Nations inter-agency statement of 25 June 2009 on the green economy, stating that a shift towards a green economy could create dynamic new industries, quality jobs and income growth while mitigating and adapting to climate change and arresting biodiversity decline. They were conscious of the joint crisis initiatives of the High-level Committee on Programmes and, in particular, cluster 4 on the green economy, in addition to the global green new deal proposed by UNEP.

33. The senior officials said that efforts to make the transition to a green economy should be extended beyond crisis response and involve longer-term development considerations. There was a need for clarity in the manner in which the United Nations communicated its messages and advice to countries on the green economy and on the relationship between the overall concept and other environment and development initiatives, such as the Millennium Development Goals. There was also a need to substantiate and broaden the economic case for short-term and long-term investment in the environment. Responses needed to be attuned to varying social and ecological contexts at the regional and national levels.

14 ICCD/COP(8)/16/Add.1.

15 Report of the Environment Management Group informal consultation on land, New York, May 2009 (EMG/L-M-1/03) on <http://www.unemg.org>.

34. Current efforts by UNEP to work with partners on preparing a report that would make the economic case for a green economy and underscore the important role of Governments in the march towards such an economy were welcomed by the senior officials, as were the efforts to prepare a series of reports on the economics of biodiversity and ecosystems. Given that the United Nations system represented so many sectors, including finance, health and agriculture, they said that the system was uniquely placed to substantiate and implement the concept of the green economy.

35. The senior officials agreed, within the context of global environmental change, to assess how the United Nations system could more coherently support countries in making the transition to a green economy. They also agreed to work on joint and consistent messaging regarding measures needed to support the transition. Furthermore, they agreed to develop terms of reference, a process, budget and time frame for an issue management group to tackle this issue and requested the Group secretariat to engage electronically with Group members over the coming three months to agree on the terms of reference for the establishment of the issue management group.

D. Enhanced coherence in mainstreaming environmental considerations in operational activities at the country level by the United Nations system

36. This work stream remains in an early phase and will need to be further developed in consultation with the United Nations Development Group. Under consideration is the question of environmental and social safeguards in the United Nations system.

Consultations on environmental and social safeguards in the United Nations system

37. Group members have welcomed the opportunity to consult on an approach to environmental and social safeguards in the United Nations system as part of its wider fiduciary standards. Members felt that, while individual agencies had developed or were working on environmental and social safeguards for their policies and operations, the United Nations system would benefit from a common approach drawing on, among other sources, existing standards and guidelines, such as those of the World Bank. UNEP and the World Bank have expressed readiness to contribute to an in-depth discussion on this topic at future Group meetings.

38. Group members felt that the issue would require discussion, including on its links to the United Nations Development Group and a decision on follow-up at the technical level. Further discussion of the matter, including the question of soliciting support for its implementation from United Nations system agencies, may be found in a guidance note on environmental sustainability prepared by the United Nations Development Group.¹⁶ A key question that needs to be considered is the scope of any such guidelines both in terms of coverage (dimensions of environmental and social issues) and application (policies, programmes, projects and partners).

39. At their fifteenth meeting the senior officials welcomed the recommendation from the Group's technical meeting on possibilities for enhancing social and environmental safeguards in the United Nations system and the potential benefits of a common approach to these safeguards for policies and operations in the system. They felt that a consultative scoping process was needed and welcomed the contribution by the World Bank to such a process. They therefore requested the Chair of the Group to prepare, in consultation with Group members, the United Nations Development Group and the High-level Committee on Management, for the Group's consideration, a report on options for the development of a possible United Nations system-wide approach to environmental and social safeguards based on a review of existing policies and guidelines.

16 Guidance note for United Nations country teams and implementing partners on mainstreaming environmental sustainability in country analysis and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, prepared by the task team on environmental sustainability and climate change jointly chaired by UNEP and UNDP within the working group on programming issues in the United Nations Development Group, which is to be considered for endorsement by the United Nations Development Group (see http://www.undg.org/docs/10662/ES_GuidanceNote_FINAL.pdf).