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**Policy issues: state of the environment**

**South-South cooperation in achieving sustainable development**

**Report by the Executive Director**

*Summary*

By paragraph 9 of its decision 24/12 of 9 February 2007 on South-South cooperation in achieving sustainable development, the Governing Council requested the Executive Director to report on progress made in that regard. The present report responds to the request by summarizing activities undertaken by UNEP and presenting activities planned in the context of the implementation of the decision.

\* UNEP/GC.25/1.

# Implementation of decision 24/12 on South-South cooperation in achieving sustainable development

## Report by the Executive Director

### I. Suggested action by the Governing Council

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

*The Governing Council,*

*Recalling* its decision 24/12 of 9 February 2007 on South-South cooperation in achieving sustainable development,

*Recalling also* the United Nations Environment Programme medium-term strategy for 2010–2013, as welcomed by decision SS.X/3 of 22 February 2008 on a medium-term strategy for the period 2010–2013 of 22 February 2008,

*Takes note* of the report by the Executive Director summarizing the activities undertaken by the United Nations Environment Programme in the context of the implementation of decision 24/12 and of the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building.

### II. Introduction

2. As reflected in the medium-term strategy for the period 2010–2013, the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building is considered to be a cornerstone of the work of UNEP. It serves as the umbrella framework for “coherent, coordinated and effective delivery of environmental capacity-building and technical support activities” in response to well-defined country priorities and needs. The Bali Strategic Plan establishes South-South cooperation as a key mechanism for the implementation of the Plan and, in particular, the achievement of capacity-building objectives set forth therein. Specifically, “the plan underscores the importance of South-South cooperation and stresses the need to intensify efforts directed towards institutional capacity-building, including through the exchange of expertise, experiences, information and documentation between the institutions of the South in order to develop human resources and strengthen the institutions of the South”.

3. At the global level, South-South cooperation is widely recognized as a key mechanism for the development of countries of the South and enjoys broad-based support from both the donor community and developing countries. Specifically:

(a) Recognition by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development of South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation as significant complements to official development assistance is a major breakthrough in global dialogue processes concerning development assistance;

(b) At its summit held in Gleneagles, Scotland, in July 2005, the Group of Eight committed itself to redoubling its efforts to achieve a successful conclusion across the entire Doha Development Agenda and acknowledged the Agenda as being vital to driving growth and boosting incomes across the world;

(c) At the 2005 World Summit high-level plenary meeting of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, heads of State and Government acknowledged the achievements and great potential of South-South cooperation as an effective contribution to development and called upon the international community, including the international financial institutions, to support the efforts of developing countries, including through triangular cooperation;

(d) Within the United Nations system, a number of United Nations agencies, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, United Nations Industrial Development Organization and World Health Organization, have strategic and operational mechanisms to promote South-South cooperation to respond to their respective institutional and capacity-development mandates;

(e) In his report on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities of the United Nations development system (A/62/295), the Secretary-General highlighted the changing dynamics in the countries of the South, including emerging opportunities for and challenges to development. He recommended that the General Assembly should encourage member States and development partners, including the United Nations system:

- (i) To optimize the use of South-South approaches in achieving internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals;
- (ii) To intensify multilateral support for South-South initiatives to address common development challenges;
- (iii) To foster inclusive partnerships for South-South cooperation, including triangular cooperation and public-private partnerships;
- (iv) To enhance the coherence of United Nations system support to South-South cooperation through closer inter-agency collaboration, joint programming and documentation of lessons learned and good practices;
- (v) To continue to develop innovative mechanisms to mobilize resources for South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives;

(f) At the regional level, a number of regional groupings and forums, such as the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment and the New Partnership for Africa's Development, have also called for increased efforts to mainstream South-South cooperation into the work of key environment and development partners;

(g) Several regional South-South cooperation initiatives have been established to foster cooperation between developing countries and to provide opportunities and options for coordinated strategic action in advancing South-South cooperation approaches.

4. These examples of major global and regional policy initiatives and forums serve to highlight the significance that is attached to South-South cooperation and the high profile that it has assumed at these levels. In recognition of the shift in perceptions regarding South-South cooperation and as a response to the relevant provisions of the Bali Strategic Plan, UNEP embarked on a process of internal discussions to operationalize South-South cooperation as a primary mechanism for the effective delivery of the technology support and capacity-building objectives set forth in the Plan.

5. In view of the broad scope of the partnerships and implementation envisaged under the Bali Strategic Plan, the operationalization of South-South cooperation as a key mechanism for the implementation of the plan entails engaging key partners, such as UNDP, to identify:

- (a) Appropriate approaches to link existing UNEP capacity-building activities to relevant activities of key partners, including the UNDP special unit for South-South cooperation;
- (b) Potential areas in which to develop and implement joint capacity-building and technology support activities that respond to needs expressed;
- (c) Innovative approaches and opportunities to catalyse complementary funding support for identified activities.

### III. Strategic approach

6. The medium-term strategy states that the Bali Strategic Plan offers UNEP an unprecedented opportunity to change the way in which it operates so as to meet better the needs of Governments and partners, and that UNEP will first and foremost ensure that implementing the objectives of the Bali Strategic Plan runs through the implementation of the six cross-cutting thematic priority areas of the medium-term strategy. It also states that the Plan constitutes an integral part of the UNEP programmes of work, noting that facilitating South-South cooperation is one of the key mechanisms for implementing capacity-building and technology support on the ground.

7. In response to decision 24/12, UNEP has adopted a broad strategic approach that focuses on conducting internal and external consultations to advance the integration of South-South cooperation arrangements into the work of the organization and in developing strategic partnerships and alliances in support of its capacity-building and technology support activities. A major component of the strategic approach comprised promoting the application of a comprehensive set of strategic and operational

guidelines that serve as the principle reference document for guiding the integration of South-South cooperation into existing and proposed activities. The guidelines also serve as substantive inputs into the efforts of UNEP to establish strategic alliances with external partners, in the development of joint collaborative activities and the identification of UNEP interventions in applying South-specific solutions and approaches in specific areas of capacity-building support in the countries of the South.

8. Other key components of the broad strategic approach adopted by UNEP to promote the application of South-South cooperation arrangements in the work of the organization include:

(a) Further developing and refining the strategic and operational guidelines to facilitate the systematic integration of South-South cooperation approaches into the UNEP programme of work to enhance the delivery of its capacity-building and technology-support activities;

(b) Holding regular and targeted consultations, discussions, workshops and briefing sessions with UNEP divisions and individual staff members to promote the adoption and systematic application of the South-South cooperation guidelines and the integration of South-specific approaches in the existing and proposed capacity-building activities of UNEP divisions;

(c) In close cooperation with UNEP regional offices and divisions, identifying priority areas for incorporation of South-South cooperation approaches in the UNEP programme of work 2008–2009;

(d) Liaising and consulting with the UNDP special unit for South-South cooperation, other United Nations agencies, relevant multilateral environmental agreement secretariats, regional cooperation mechanisms and existing South-South cooperation initiatives to establish strategic partnerships, develop joint activities and synergies in advancing South-South cooperation in support of the capacity-building efforts of UNEP in the context of the Bali Strategic Plan;

(e) Coordinating the development of a clearing-house mechanism for South-South cooperation to facilitate easy access to and delivery of expertise, technology, experiences, training opportunities, advisory services, methodologies and tools in support of UNEP capacity-building initiatives;

(f) Developing and implementing effective outreach comprising key components, such as preparing regular briefing notes, updates and progress reports on the status of implementation of UNEP South-South cooperation initiatives and providing regular briefings and updates to UNEP senior management, meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, individual diplomatic missions, regional cooperation mechanisms, United Nations agencies and intergovernmental organizations and processes. In addition, a UNEP South-South cooperation website has been established (<http://www.unep.org/south-south-cooperation/>);

(g) Liaising with regional cooperation mechanisms and donor agencies to leverage complementary technical and financial resources for identified South-South cooperation activities.

## IV. Progress and current status

9. At the operational level, UNEP has achieved a measure of success in initiating practical South-South cooperation activities that are designed to demonstrate and thereby raise awareness of the value of applying South-specific approaches to tackle the shared challenges of the countries of the South. Although a modest start, it has benefited immensely from the commitment and collaboration of some programme managers and the support of external partnerships established over the past two years. Some examples of the key activities undertaken and achievements registered by UNEP divisions merit special mention in the present report and are set out below.

### A. Clearing-house mechanism

10. In response to decision 24/12, UNEP is developing a clearing-house mechanism as a critical component of efforts to advance South-South cooperation in its work, including with key partners, in the context of the implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan. The proposed mechanism, which will be modelled along the lines of existing clearing-house mechanisms, is intended to facilitate the identification, development and promotion of opportunities for collaboration and cooperation between countries and regions of the South in support of their environment and sustainable development activities. The mechanism is also intended to facilitate South-South-North triangular cooperation.

11. The key function of the clearing-house mechanism will be to facilitate and promote the exchange of a wide range of capacity-building information on available technologies, expertise, experiences, methodologies, tools and toolkits, guidelines, best practices, advisory services, training opportunities and appropriate networks, particularly in the countries and regions of the South. The mechanism will serve to match available South-specific solutions to priority capacity-building needs identified in these countries

12. Following the successful demonstration of a prototype version of the mechanism (<http://62.160.8.20/bsp/>) at the twenty-fourth session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, UNEP is implementing, over a two-year period, a phased approach to the development of a fully-fledged mechanism, with the aim of achieving the following outputs in the short term:

- (a) Detailed system requirements analysis, highlighting identified linkages with relevant UNEP databases and systems;
- (b) Interoperability with other databases, systems and mechanisms to automate information access and exchange;
- (c) Identification of data sources, content development and enlargement of envisaged partnerships;
- (d) Functional application addressing the priority modules, including organizations, technologies, expertise, experiences, opportunities, networks and events. The application is expected to provide a facility for partners and other identified users to query and produce reports for various uses;
- (e) Operation and user manual to facilitate the further development and use of the mechanism;
- (f) Staff members trained on various aspects of the system;
- (g) Proposal outlining the implementation strategy for the remaining modules to be implemented in subsequent phases.

## **B. Review of UNEP capacity-building activities in the context of the principles of and approaches to South-South cooperation**

13. In early 2007, UNEP conducted a comprehensive review of relevant capacity-building activities of UNEP divisions and regional offices and their respective databases and information systems with a view to articulating an objective analysis of its experience in using South-South cooperation arrangements to address institutional strengthening and related capacity-building activities in the field of environment. The reviewed focused on, but was not limited to, the legislative mandates, temporal and geographical scope, formats, objectives, outputs, activities, institutional frameworks and partnerships, funding mechanisms, evaluations, results and impacts of completed and existing capacity-building programmes, projects and related activities.

14. The review, which served as an input into the *South Report* – a United Nations global publication on South-South cooperation – identified important trends, successes and challenges of recent UNEP capacity-building initiatives. In particular, the findings of the review underscored the need for sufficient resources to be committed to facilitate effective integration of South-South cooperation in UNEP programme of work activities, to develop priority high-profile demonstrable projects, to ensure a multiplicity of benefits from the cooperation, convergence with priority donor and recipient requirements and the generation of tangible outputs. In addition, the review called for the formalization of partnerships for promoting South-South cooperation at the national, regional and international levels; the development of a policy guidance note for implementing South-South cooperation approaches across the UNEP programme of work and employing knowledge management strategies and tools. These findings serve as an important frame of reference for the further development and refinement of the strategic and operational guidelines to facilitate the systematic integration of South-South cooperation approaches in the UNEP programme of work.

## **C. Triangular cooperation exchange programme**

15. The triangular cooperation exchange programme – a joint initiative of the Division of Early Warning and Assessment and the Regional Office for Africa – is intended to strengthen institutional capacities for integrated environmental assessment and reporting within the framework of phase II of the Africa Environment Information Network project. This South-South-North triangular cooperation

initiative is supported by Fredskorpset Norway, a Norwegian government institution that promotes capacity-building for developing country institutions through technical cooperation, networking and the exchange of technical expertise in the context of South-South cooperation. The cooperation arrangements also include the engagement of Norwegian institutions specifically to provide specialized technical support to participating institutions in developing countries. The implementation of the specific exchange activities started in early June 2007 and focused on the following:

(a) Technical training workshop for participants for all the exchange programmes covered by Fredskorpset Norway, held in Oslo from 28 May to 8 June 2007. The objective of the workshop, which brought together 120 participants, was to acquaint them with the policies and operational procedures of Fredskorpset Norway and the principles under which the various exchange programmes were formulated and implemented;

(b) Technical briefing session for selected staff of the collaborating institutions of UNEP participating in the triangular cooperation exchange programme with a focus on terms of reference, expected outputs, roles and responsibilities. The briefing session was held in Arendal, Norway, from 10 to 13 June 2007, and was attended by exchange programme participants drawn from the following collaborating institutions:

- (i) National Environment Management Authority of Uganda;
- (ii) Southern Africa Research and Documentation Centre, based in Harare;
- (iii) Environmental Information Systems-Africa, a pan-African institution based in Pretoria;
- (iv) The GRID-Arendal UNEP collaborating centre, Norway;

(c) Administrative briefing session held back-to-back with the technical briefing session focused on logistical arrangements to facilitate the exchanges. The key logistical issues tackled in the briefing included residence visas, work permits, travel, allowances and accommodation arrangements;

(d) Travel and attachments of the selected exchange participants to their respective stations:

- (i) With regard to the Ugandan National Environment Management Authority, one staff member travelled to Pretoria for attachment to Environmental Information Systems-Africa in a South-South arrangement specifically to provide expertise in geographic information systems and spatial data infrastructure design, including training of national institutions in the Africa Environment Information Network programme to enhance their skills in these fields;
- (ii) A staff member from the Southern Africa Research and Documentation Centre travelled to Uganda for attachment to the National Environment Management Authority in a South-South arrangement to acquire on-the-job training in desktop publishing and outreach material design in the context of integrated environmental assessment and reporting;
- (iii) A staff member from GRID-Arendal travelled to the Southern Africa Research and Documentation Centre in a North-South arrangement to assist the development of capacity of the centre in vital graphics, web interface management and training of national institutions in the Africa Environment Information Network programme. In addition, the attached staff member will assist in building skills in the design of outreach materials;
- (iv) One GRID-Arendal staff member travelled to Pretoria for attachment to Environmental Information Systems-Africa in a North-South arrangement to develop and enhance the institution's capacity for strategic environmental information marketing and fund-raising;
- (v) One staff member from the Southern Africa Research and Documentation Centre travelled to GRID-Arendal in a South-North arrangement to acquire on-the-job training and skills in environmental data and information management.

16. The above-mentioned attachments were undertaken over a 12-month period and were completed in June 2008, at which time the overall exchange programme was reviewed to document successes and lessons learned and to explore the necessity of renewing the programme for a longer period incorporating additional capacity-building activities. The partners in the programme were of the general view that the exchange programme significantly enhanced capacity at both the institutional and

individual levels and that participants and partners alike benefited therefrom. The participants indicated that they were satisfied with the level of their involvement in their host institutions' work and that they were exposed to new opportunities. It was agreed that the next phase of the programme should begin in November 2008 and focus on four collaborating centres to be identified by UNEP.

#### **D. South-South network of Global Environment Outlook collaborating centres**

17. In early 2007, UNEP initiated the implementation of a project to establish and strengthen a South-South network of Global Environment Outlook collaborating centres for integrated environmental assessment and reporting in support of the UNEP Outlook programme and report series. The project, which is funded from the United Nations Development Account at a cost of \$560,000, is currently being implemented in Africa, Asia and the Pacific and Latin America with a focus on strengthening the capacities of Global Environment Outlook collaborating centres and their network partners through the application of South-South cooperation approaches and modalities. Key elements of the capacity-building efforts of the project include:

- (a) Establishing mechanisms to facilitate inter- and intra-regional technical cooperation and interaction between Global Environment Outlook collaborating centres in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean and West Asia;
- (b) Improving access to integrated environment assessment reporting tools and methodologies;
- (c) Enhancing capacity of Global Environment Outlook collaborating centres to undertake integrated environmental assessment and reporting at regional and subregional levels;
- (d) Improving information and communication technologies-based networking, knowledge management and information access.

18. The UNEP South-South Cooperation Coordination Unit in the Division of Regional Cooperation will maintain technical involvement in the implementation of the project to provide backstopping support as appropriate in the application of South-South cooperation approaches in key capacity-building and institutional strengthening areas.

#### **E. New Asian-African strategic partnership for capacity-building in environmental law**

19. UNEP is also implementing a South-South cooperation initiative in the framework of the new Asian-African strategic partnership. The objective of the initiative, which is supported by the Government of Japan (\$2.2 million), is to strengthen institutional capacities and national regulatory frameworks for effective implementation of international environmental law and policy in Asia and Africa. The implementation of the initiative, which began in mid-2007, is based on preparatory activities and workshops convened in December 2006. These preparatory efforts culminated in the identification of specific capacity-building activities to be implemented in 2007 and 2008 specifically to establish a sustained effort using South-South cooperation approaches to enhance the capacities of countries in Africa and Asia to respond to their priority needs in environmental law and legislation. These activities comprise part of a draft blueprint for a medium-term programme of support for the Asia and Africa environmental law initiative in the context of the new Asian-African strategic partnership. The capacity-building activities serve as opportunities for UNEP to consolidate and strengthen its efforts to fully integrate South-South cooperation in its programmes of work whilst promoting the adoption of these approaches in Africa and Asia.

20. To facilitate implementation of the initiative, UNEP signed a memorandum of understanding with the Government of Japan in March 2007, which provided UNEP with the financial support required to implement the identified activities. UNEP subsequently drafted a project document to guide the implementation of the initiative. Key elements of the project include:

- (a) Assessing and analysing national legislation in selected countries in mainstreaming environment into legal frameworks;
- (b) Developing environmental law, ensuring compliance with multilateral environmental agreements, implementing commitments in the field of the environment and strengthening national and regional environment-related institutions;

(c) Identifying national needs and developing national environmental legal frameworks, building capacity to tackle global environmental issues and strengthening environmental legislation and related institutions;

(d) Providing, training and enhancing existing centres of excellence, exchanges of best practices and lessons learned and developing partnerships by networking government institutions and other legal stakeholders active in the development and implementation of environmental law;

(e) Building knowledge concerning relationships between development-related legislation and institutions on the one hand and environmental legislation and institutions on the other, together with exchanging information on good examples of effective linkages between development and environmental institutions in developing countries.

## **F. Strengthening capacities for water resources management through the application of South-South modalities at the national and regional levels**

21. In conjunction with national and regional water resources experts and government representatives from developing countries, UNEP has developed a draft South-South cooperation programme to build national, subregional and regional capacities for water resources management. The programme will be implemented within the overall framework of the UNEP water policy and strategy. The draft programme is based on the outcomes of two workshops convened by UNEP in October 2007 and May 2008, respectively, to identify priority areas in water resources management in developing countries and to articulate potential interventions for addressing these priorities using South-South cooperation modalities. The workshops were attended by representatives from Governments and subregional organizations and universities from Africa, Asia and Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean and West Asia.

22. Key elements of the draft South-South cooperation programme include:

(a) *Establishing a global South-South facilitation mechanism:* To facilitate practical cooperation arrangements between countries that have established relevant expertise and skills in formulating and implementing their national water policies and those that have expressed the need for such capacities;

(b) *Facilitating knowledge exchange and awareness-raising:* To build an extensive targeted inventory of resources, experts and institutions with relevant experiences on policy formulation and implementation. The inventory will be hosted in a user-friendly and searchable database shared between countries and will be used to document case studies and a catalogue of best practices on incorporating ecosystems in water policy formulation and implementation;

(c) *Skills development:* To respond to the skills gap in developing countries in the application of the ecosystem approach in water policy formulation and implementation. Needs-based training activities will be developed for specific countries or groups of countries, including identification and modification of existing training programmes, where appropriate, to meet expressed needs, developing new modules to cover areas of gaps, and working with training providers from public and civil society organizations to disseminate the programmes at various levels. Implementation of the component will also entail working with academic institutions to promote incorporation of integrated water resources management principles in relevant courses at the graduate level;

(d) *Institutional development:* To focus on strengthening institutional frameworks for water policy formulation and implementation and improving coordinating mechanisms for better stakeholder participation in these processes;

(e) *Projects to demonstrate South-South cooperation in the application of the ecosystem approach in integrated water resources management:* To formulate and implement pilot South-South cooperation projects between two or more countries to facilitate the transfer of practical know-how in the application of the ecosystem approach in integrated water resources management. The outputs of the pilot projects will form the basis for defining an operational model for future South-South cooperation initiatives and agreements.

## **G. South-South cooperation in waste management, law and governance**

23. With the support of the Government of Indonesia and the Non-Aligned Movement Centre for South-South Technical Cooperation, UNEP organized an interregional workshop on South-South cooperation on waste management, law and governance in Bali, Indonesia, from 19 to 21 June 2008.

The workshop was attended by 45 participants from 23 developing countries and relevant international organizations, academics and civil society organizations.

24. The purpose of the workshop was to share best practices and lessons learned in waste management, legislation and governance in developing countries and to identify practical approaches for strengthening institutional capacities in these areas using South-South cooperation approaches. The following key actions were recommended for further consideration by Governments, national stakeholders, relevant international and regional organizations and multilateral environmental agreements:

- (a) Awareness-raising in waste management issues for all stakeholders, particularly on the need to reduce, reuse and recycle (the “3R” principle) and proper treatment and disposal of waste;
- (b) Activities to demonstrate clearly the environmental, economic and social dimensions of integrated solid waste management;
- (c) Consideration of interlinkages with other sectors, such as energy, trade, industry, health, in the development of integrated solid waste management approaches;
- (d) Creating an enabling environment for investment, both domestic and foreign, including the development of case studies and instruments to encourage financial institutions and development banks to establish dedicated schemes to finance the implementation of integrated solid waste management plans at the national and local levels;
- (e) UNEP, in cooperation with other relevant organizations, should support demonstration and pilot projects at the national and local levels with extensive replication potential with an emphasis on integrated solid waste management strategies and action plans;
- (f) UNEP should develop guidelines and support to the development of policy (regulatory and economics instruments) and voluntary instruments leading to the formation of a conducive policy framework; and identification and assessment of environmentally sound technologies for waste collection, segregation, reuse and recycling, treatment and disposal;
- (g) UNEP and the Non-Aligned Movement Centre for South-South Technical Cooperation should continue their cooperation in capacity-building and technology support, in line with the Bali Strategic Plan on Technology Support and Capacity-building, in developing countries on integrated solid waste management through the development and extensive delivery of training packages;
- (h) UNEP, with the support of the Non-Aligned Movement Centre for South-South Technical Cooperation, relevant regional organizations, convention secretariats and regional centres, should facilitate information exchange and capacity-building in waste management including the following:
  - (i) To exchange information on the environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes;
  - (ii) To disseminate and update guidelines of environmentally sound technologies on waste open dumping area and landfill;
  - (iii) Best practices and lessons learned on best available and environmentally sound waste technology, waste management, financing and governance, including law enforcement mechanisms and combating illegal trafficking of hazardous wastes or other wastes;
  - (iv) Experiences in the effectiveness of coordination between various stakeholders, in particular national and local institutions and other stakeholders involved in waste management;
  - (v) Capacity to develop project proposals for specific schemes and activities under integrated solid waste management;

25. Other actions items for further consideration include:

- (a) Promoting and enhancing sustainable public-private partnerships and public-public partnerships on integrated solid waste management;
- (b) Using the existing international and regional centres to support South-South cooperation, including the Non-Aligned Movement Centre for South-South Technical Cooperation and Basel Convention regional centres;

(c) Promoting information-sharing on the use of extended producer responsibility instruments in integrated solid waste management, where producers establish a system to take back their goods for recycling and proper disposal after the goods are used;

(d) The Non-Aligned Movement Centre for South-South Technical Cooperation should promote South-South cooperation in integrated solid waste management, including the exchange of experts and trainers; identifying opportunities for study visits and attachments; and providing a platform for business-to-business and business-to-Government interactions;

(e) The need to strengthen triangular cooperation in waste management;

(f) Developing a website on integrated solid waste management, best practices and a roster of experts of developing countries;

(g) Strengthening the coordination role of UNEP in providing technical assistance on integrated solid waste management, law and governance to developing countries.

## **H. Oil and gas development: sharing experiences and lessons learned within the framework of South-South cooperation**

26. UNEP, in conjunction with the UNDP special unit for South-South cooperation, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the Canadian International Development Agency, organized a high-level global meeting on South-South cooperation in oil and gas development in Doha in September 2007. The objective of the meeting was to share experiences and formulate practical approaches for supporting low-income and emerging market countries to tackle the challenges associated with oil and gas development within the framework of South-South cooperation, namely environmental management and impacts; legislation, compliance and regulatory issues; macroeconomic issues, including growth and poverty reduction challenges; institutional frameworks; and intra-government coordination and organization). A key agenda item of the high-level meeting was concerned with on the environmental challenges and safeguards in the overall development and management of the oil and gas sector in developing countries. The meeting brought together senior officials from 42 countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America and from United Nations agencies and international organizations.

27. UNEP was designated to take the lead in preparing well-articulated background discussion documents as well as conducting the discussion of this agenda item to ensure that the key issues emerging from the discussion would be accurately reflected in the outputs of the meeting. The meeting generated key elements of a comprehensive programme of support aimed at building and strengthening emerging and prospective oil- and gas-producing countries to tackle many of the associated challenges, such as environmental impacts and mitigation responses, legal and regulatory frameworks, institutional capacities and forward planning, macroeconomic concerns and challenges and climate change impacts.

## **I. Overview of current South-South cooperation activities**

28. Detailed information about the range of other South-South cooperation activities currently under implementation by various UNEP divisions and regional offices may be found in document UNEP/GC.25/INF/19.

## **V. Potential South-South cooperation activities**

29. The following is a sample of potential high-profile South-South cooperation activities to be developed by UNEP divisions and regional offices. Additional South-South cooperation activities under consideration are also listed in document UNEP/GC.25/INF/19.

### **A. Cuba, Dominican Republic and Haiti South-South cooperation initiative**

30. The UNEP Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean has held a series of consultations with the ministers of environment of Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Haiti, focusing on the possibility of establishing a South-South cooperation initiative that would bring together the three countries in undertaking joint capacity-building projects in areas of common interest and concern. Potential priority areas under discussions include:

- (a) Biodiversity;
- (b) Forestry;
- (c) Waste management;
- (d) Disaster management.

31. Further detailed discussions and consultations are planned, focusing on each of the broad areas of interest with the aim of identifying specific priority areas for South-South cooperation activities including recommendations on the most appropriate institutional frameworks and modalities for further development and implementation of the activities identified. On the basis of the outcome of these discussions, the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean will work with the three countries to develop project proposals on the agreed priority areas and provide inputs in leveraging funding support for the implementation of the South-South cooperation activities.

## **B. Experiences of Brazil reforestation initiatives**

32. The Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean has held discussions with the Brazilian Government to explore the possibility of using their success in promoting reforestation of the Amazon basin as a basis for developing high-profile South-South cooperation projects involving Brazil and developing countries with similar forest management challenges, such as the countries of the Congo basin. Further consultations have indicated that Brazil has expressed an interest and willingness to use their satellite-based forest monitoring system to strengthen the capacities of other developing countries to develop and use similar systems. Consequently, UNEP has drafted a briefing note on the potential of developing a South-South cooperation initiative based on that experience and technology to guide formal discussions with Brazil on a potential broad South-South cooperation programme in the forestry sector.

## **C. Africa Environment Information Network phase II**

33. The UNEP Division of Early Warning and Assessment is currently implementing the Africa Environment Information Network strategy and plan, which will incorporate South-South cooperation approaches as the primary framework for all the capacity-building activities of phase II of the network operations. The current preparatory process for phase II of the network has identified a number of draft triangular cooperation project ideas that will be elaborated into practical capacity-building activities for implementation in this phase. Preparatory efforts will entail holding consultations with the recipient countries to further refine the identified South-South cooperation capacity-building activities. Although phase II has incorporated 24 additional countries to bring the total number of countries participating in the programme to 36, a recent shift in approach has necessitated investing in a more strategic and enhanced focus on fewer countries that are likely to register success in responding to the objectives of the programme while generating good quality products and outcomes. The prospective South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation activities will be part of the revised strategic and enhanced focus initiatives. More specifically, the identified South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation activities will build on the existing and proposed exchange programmes involving exchanges between Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, South Africa, Tunisia and Uganda and between Kenya and Uganda.

## **D. Development of atlases of environmental change as decision support tools at the national and subregional levels in Africa**

34. The publications *One Planet Many People: Atlas of Our Changing Environment* and the *Atlas of Africa's Changing Environment* have proven to be extremely successful products for UNEP and have generated several requests for support to produce similar products at the national and subregional levels in Africa. Consequently, the Division of Early Warning and Assessment is exploring opportunities for developing a South-South cooperation programme that will focus on strengthening national and subregional capacities to produce similar atlases. Key elements of a draft programme of support include:

- (a) Capacity-building and institutional strengthening with an initial focus on the use of landsat data donated by the United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration;
- (b) Generation of decision-support tools, including atlases and videos of environmental change;

- (c) Establishment of long-term institutional and technical cooperation modalities as a means of continuously accessing recent and relevant data;
- (d) Documentation of lessons, impacts, best practices and case studies, among others;
- (e) Development of training materials.

## **E. Bridging challenges in transboundary freshwater governance**

35. The UNEP Division of Environmental Law and Conventions, in conjunction with other UNEP divisions and regional offices, will convene a high-level conference in the first week of March 2009 on transboundary freshwater governance in the framework of South-South cooperation. The conference, which will serve as a platform to exchange views and experiences is targeted at experts and representatives of Governments, relevant river basin organizations from Africa, Asia Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and United Nations agencies, multilateral environmental agreement secretariats and selected international water organizations and networks. The objective of the conference is to identify challenges, opportunities and priority actions for bridging gaps and strengthening transboundary freshwater governance, particularly its environmental dimension. The focus of the conference will be on the following governance themes:

- (a) Strengthening environmental dimensions (ecosystem services);
- (b) Strengthening transboundary river basin management;
- (c) Impacts of climate change on freshwater resources governance;
- (d) Building political and financial commitment and momentum;
- (e) Enhancing the role of the private sector and civil society.

## **F. Renewable energy**

36. UNEP is conducting preliminary consultations with the Government of Indonesia to explore potential approaches for meeting the country's priority needs in renewable energy issues in a South-South cooperation approach that will draw on the experience and expertise of China and India in that field. UNEP has drafted a concept note that will serve to guide further consultations with officials from the Government of Indonesia and their counterparts in China and India on the way forward and more specifically on further development of the concept note into a broad programme proposal for further consideration by potential partners.

# **VI. Challenges**

37. The above-mentioned achievements notwithstanding, the implementation of South-South cooperation as a key mechanism of the Bali Strategic Plan faces financial and strategic challenges. Unless these challenges are tackled in a comprehensive manner, there is a risk of losing gains achieved to date and losing the momentum of existing and prospective activities.

## **A. Leveraging internal funding support**

38. The Environment Fund budget for 2008–2009 does not provide for operational costs that are essential for effective coordination of South-South cooperation initiatives across organizations. In view of the increasing volume of requests for support and guidance in initiating high-profile South-South cooperation initiatives in countries of the South, responses to these requests will have to be funded from extrabudgetary sources. The generation of tangible outputs from existing and prospective South-South cooperation activities are of crucial importance if UNEP is to attract substantial funding support in the short- and medium-term and thereby help to establish South-South cooperation as a key mechanism for the delivery of the UNEP capacity-building and technology support mandate. The insufficient funding support from the UNEP Environment Fund poses a serious threat to the gains achieved to date and, more importantly, to the expectations of Governments and other key partners on the role and profile of South-South cooperation as an essential component of UNEP capacity-building and technology support efforts.

## **B. Systematic approach to UNEP capacity-building activities**

39. Whereas substantial progress has been achieved in promoting operational guidelines for integrating South-South cooperation in the activities of UNEP, the lack of a coherent and coordinated approach to capacity-building across the organization continues to pose a challenge to the systematic application of South-South cooperation in capacity-building efforts undertaken by various UNEP divisions.

## **C. Matching available expertise to expressed needs**

40. The development of a clearing-house mechanism to facilitate the matching of available expertise to expressed needs is resource-intensive and will require considerable time to develop, test and operationalize. The current lack of such an operational mechanism limits the ability of UNEP to meet requests for matching available South-specific expertise and knowledge to identified needs in the short term. Although UNEP has embarked on developing the clearing-house mechanism, its long-term operation and maintenance will require significant financial and technical resources that will have to be leveraged from external budgetary resources.

## **D. Effective outreach and related promotional impacts**

41. To ensure that capacity-building activities have an effect, a long-term undertaking is required, which in itself poses challenges to the ability of UNEP to demonstrate the value and role of South-South cooperation in succeeding in implementing the Bali Strategic Plan. The need to undertake high-profile, high-impact activities with sufficient resources is of particular importance if UNEP is to continue to promote and raise the profile of South-South cooperation internally and with partners at various levels.

42. The participation of UNEP in the current United Nations reform process, which is aimed at fostering coherent and coordinated delivery as part of the "Delivering as one" approach, the alignment of the UNEP programme of work with the six cross-cutting thematic priorities of the medium-term strategy, the strategic presence study and the strengthening of the interface between divisions and regional delivery all serve as excellent opportunities for the realignment of South-South cooperation implementation approaches with these strategic and organizational changes. The changes constitute, therefore, opportunities for overcoming some of the challenges outlined above.

## **VII. Concluding remarks**

43. Although the systematic application of South-South cooperation in its work is a relatively new undertaking for UNEP, significant progress has been achieved to that end and in raising interest in such cooperation among its client base. There is every indication that the interest will continue to grow in 2009 and beyond, as will requests for UNEP to meet the high expectations that Governments and other partners have regarding the delivery of environmental capacity-building and technology support through South-South cooperation arrangements. The adoption by the Governing Council at its twenty-fourth session of decision 24/12 of 9 February 2007, sponsored by the Group of 77 and China, which called for increased efforts in the implementation of South-South cooperation, is a clear manifestation of these expectations. Meeting these expectations will require UNEP to make regular adjustments in its programming and operational processes, including leveraging sufficient resources for the envisaged expansion of the portfolio of South-South cooperation initiatives.