



## United Nations Environment Programme

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**Intergovernmental consultation on strengthening the  
scientific base of the United Nations Environment Programme**  
Nairobi, 14–15 January 2004

### **Report of the intergovernmental consultation on strengthening the scientific base of the United Nations Environment Programme**

#### **I. Opening of the meeting**

1. The meeting was opened at 9.45 a.m. on Wednesday, 14 January 2004, by Mr. Shafqat Kakakhel, Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Welcoming the participants, he recalled that environment ministers at the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum held in Cartagena in February 2002 had recommended that further consideration should be given to strengthening the scientific base of UNEP by improving its ability to monitor and assess global environmental change including, among other things, through the establishment of an intergovernmental panel on global environmental change. In order to strengthen the scientific base of UNEP the twenty-second session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum had initiated a thorough and participatory consultative process involving Governments, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and the scientific community. That consultative process was what UNEP termed the Science Initiative.

2. He said that, as requested by the Governing Council, UNEP had consulted Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and the scientific community on means of identifying and addressing gaps and the types of assessment needs related to the environment and environmental change. The current intergovernmental consultation was being held in preparation for the eighth special session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum in Jeju in March 2004. He noted that the Executive Director had taken advantage of the intergovernmental consultation to organize a two-day meeting of leading scientific and technical experts, which had taken place over the previous two days, as well as an informal inter-agency meeting on 16 January 2004, after the current consultation. The conclusions of the deliberations of the present intergovernmental consultation would enrich the findings of the synthesis report and would be an important input for the Executive Director's report to the eighth special session, and would assist UNEP in prioritising its further programme activities in the area of environmental assessments. He wished the participants every success in their discussions and deliberations.

3. In his opening statement, the Executive Director of UNEP, Mr. Klaus Töpfer, welcomed participants to UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. He extended his thanks to participating scientists, including those from the International Council for Science (ICSU) and the Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment (SCOPE), for their advice and for the fruitful outcomes of the scientific

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meeting held on 12 and 13 January 2004. The process under way had been made possible with the financial backing of Governments and, in that context, he thanked the Governments of Norway and the Netherlands for their generosity in providing support to the process and to the current meeting in particular.

4. He recognized the importance of assessing interlinkages to strengthen the scientific base of UNEP, including the work of multilateral environmental agreements and the link to the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation with specific targets and timetables. He emphasized areas requiring attention such as capacity-building in developing countries; the strengthening of the network of cooperation centres developed through the Global Environment Outlook (GEO) process; making South-South cooperation more productive and developing partnerships with such bodies as ICSU and the Third World Academy of Sciences. He underlined the importance of finding implementable results to the three questions under review and urged those scientists present to concentrate on matters pertaining to planet earth before turning their thoughts to the moon and Mars.

5. The consultation was attended by 157 governmental representatives from 93 countries and more than 50 observers from intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and scientific institutions. The full list of participants may be consulted on the web site [science.unep.org](http://science.unep.org).

6. Representatives of the following Governments attended the consultation:

Albania, Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, China, Colombia, Congo, Cuba, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Egypt, Finland, France, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guinea-Bissau, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Madagascar, Mauritius, Monaco, Mongolia, Mozambique, Nepal, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia and Montenegro, Seychelles, Slovakia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

7. In addition, observers from the following intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and other bodies attended as observers:

African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS); Committee on Science and Technology of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa; Convention on Biological Diversity; Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES); Division of Ecological Sciences and Man and the Biosphere Programme of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); Drylands Development Centre of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); Enjimson Consult; European Environment Agency (EEA); Global International Waters Assessment (GIWA); IAEA Marine Environment Laboratory; Initiative on Science and Technology for Sustainability (ISTS); Institute for Globalization and Sustainable Development (GLOBUS); Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC); International Centre for Scientific and Technical Information (ICSTI); International Council of Science (ICSU); International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change (IHDP); International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis; International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI); Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO); IUCN Eastern Africa; Kwansai Gakuin University; Millennium Ecosystem Assessment; National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM); Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); Ozone Secretariat; Russian Federal Environmental Emergency Response Centre; Scientific Advisory Committee of the European Environment Agency (EEA); Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF); Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment (SCOPE) of ICSU; Stanford University; The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI); Tongji University; UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC); UNEP-GEMS/Water Programme; United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT); United Nations Statistics Division; University of Witwatersrand; World Bank; World Conservation Union (IUCN); World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

## II. Organization of work

### A. Election of officers

8. Given that the intergovernmental consultation had been called for by the Governing Council and was an integral part of the international environmental governance process, it was agreed that members of the Bureau of the Governing Council should serve as elected officers for the present consultation. Following a proposal by the President of the Governing Council, Ms. Tanya van Gool (Netherlands), one of the vice-chairs of the Bureau, was nominated chair of the present consultative meeting and her nomination was approved by acclamation. Mr. Petr Kopřiva (Czech Republic), also a member of the Bureau, was invited to serve as rapporteur.

9. The Chair said that the Bureau of the Governing Council had noted the high level of interest on the part of Governments in the current consultative process, and welcomed the synthesis report and the facilitation by the Executive Director of the current consultation. She paid tribute to the work of the secretariat in the preparation of the documentation for the meeting.

### B. Organization of the meeting

10. The provisional agenda, as contained in document UNEP/SI/IGC/1, and as provided in annex I to the present report, was adopted.

11. The Chair noted that the Executive Director had recommended that the plenary should address the three questions posed in Governing Council decision 22/1 I A, namely: Question 1: what were the likely gaps and types of assessment needs with respect to the environment and environmental change? Question 2: how were UNEP and other organizations meeting those assessment needs? Question 3: what options existed with respect to meeting any unfulfilled needs that fell within the role and mandate of UNEP? It would be the task of the Executive Director to transmit a summary of the recommendations and conclusions of the consultation to the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum at its eighth special session.

12. Following a proposal by the Chair, the consultation agreed on the establishment of a group of friends of the Chair, to assist in drawing up recommendations and conclusions after full discussions had been held in plenary. Although the group would be open-ended, it was agreed that each regional group would put forward two members, and that Mr. Andrew Kiptoon (Kenya) would chair the group.

## III. Consideration of the key questions on strengthening the scientific base of the United Nations Environment Programme

13. Introducing the item, a representative of the secretariat drew attention to documents UNEP/SI/IGC/2 (Synthesis of responses on strengthening the scientific base of the United Nations Environment Programme), UNEP/SI/IGC/2/Add.1 (Issues for consideration regarding strengthening the scientific base of the United Nations Environment Programme) and UNEP/SI/IGC/INF/1 (Note by the secretariat, with an annexed draft report analysing the additional questions regarding strengthening the scientific base of the United Nations Environment Programme posed by the secretariat). The first of these documents, the synthesis report, presented an analysis of the Governing Council questions and considerations and was based on 122 substantive responses from 59 Governments, 21 intergovernmental organizations, 17 non-governmental organizations and 25 scientific institutions, received before 12 November 2003.

14. He said that the synthesis of responses to question 1 identified the following gaps and types of assessment needs with regard to the environment and environmental change:

- (a) Assessment of existing environmental challenges;
- (b) Assessment of interlinkages;
- (c) Scientific credibility, legitimacy and relevance in the assessment process;
- (d) Cost-effectiveness, cooperation and strengthening of existing institutions;

- (e) Developing country participation and capacity-building.

15. Under question 3, the additional option referred to in paragraph 3 (d) of decision 22/1 I A, of the possible establishment of an intergovernmental panel on global environmental change, had been commented upon by most respondents, and the responses had revealed a difference of views regarding the added value of establishing such a panel. It was noted in the comments that the functions of an assessment panel and an advisory body were not fully compatible, as the panel would not be intended to give advice but to ensure scientific credibility and include peer review from experts, Governments and other stakeholders, while an advisory body would be part of the decision-making process. Given the current differences of opinion regarding the establishment of the panel, the secretariat proposed that, in line with the principle that form should follow function, it might be better to try to reach consensus on the broad set of assessment needs and functions first, and then explore the need for mechanisms to support them.

16. The Chair then invited Mr. Thomas Rosswall, Executive Director of ICSU, to give a brief presentation on the outcome of the scientific and technical meeting on strengthening the scientific base of the United Nations Environment Programme, held prior to the current consultation, on 12 and 13 January 2004.

17. Mr. Rosswall posed the central issues in strengthening the scientific base of UNEP as being the need for an input from natural, social, engineering and health sciences, as well as partnerships with the international science community, with other components of the United Nations system, with other ongoing and planned assessments and with multilateral environmental agreements. The scientific meeting believed that the survey just carried out and the responses received provided an excellent point of departure and a rich input to the UNEP secretariat. That meeting, however, had concentrated on two issues: interlinkages between environmental challenges, and strengthening the scientific credibility of the GEO process. Detailing the meeting recommendations on those two issues, he said in conclusion that science had to become more policy-relevant, and the scientific community was ready to contribute. A summary of the considerations and recommendations of the scientific and technical meeting is contained in annex II to the present report.

18. The Chair then invited the consultation to proceed with its consideration of the items under the three sessions, namely:

- (a) Session 1: Discussion on question 1 and related considerations: What are the likely gaps and types of assessment needs with respect to the environment and environmental change?
- (b) Session 2: Discussion on question 2 and related considerations: How are the United Nations Environment Programme and other organizations currently meeting those assessment needs?
- (c) Session 3: Discussion on question 3 and related considerations: What options exist with respect to meeting any unfulfilled needs that fall within the role and mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme?

19. The consultation's deliberations on those items are reflected in chapter IV below, which sets forward its conclusions and recommendations.

## IV. Conclusions and recommendations

20. Introducing the item, the Chair tabled three reports by the chair of the open-ended group of friends of the Chair, summarizing the discussion and conclusions on questions 1, 2 and 3 under agenda item 3. The three reports were reviewed by the meeting and approved after minor amendments. The text of the reports is provided under sections A–C below. It was noted that the points raised in the intergovernmental consultation largely converged with the findings of the synthesis report by the Executive Director.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> UNEP/SI/IGC/2.

## A. Question 1: What are the likely gaps and types of assessment needs with respect to the environment and environmental change?

### 1. Assessment of existing environmental challenges

21. Many of the assessment needs identified in the synthesis report were reiterated. It was noted that there was a need to establish long-term assessment priorities at both the international and national levels in support of adaptive environmental monitoring and management.

22. It was recognized that there was a continuing need to assess current environmental challenges and identify new and emerging issues.

23. There was a need for an assessment of data collection and monitoring methodologies, including cost-effectiveness, standardization and interoperability of data sets to facilitate exchange of environmental information.

24. Various countries highlighted a number of specific national and regional requirements that should be addressed, such as water, land degradation, forests, chemicals, biological diversity, ecosystem services, consumption and production, environment and human health, and the environmental dimensions of pre- and post-conflict situations.

25. Special attention should be given to national, subregional, regional and international constituencies such as small island developing States.

### 2. Assessment of interlinkages

26. The need to assess interlinkages, as identified in the synthesis report, was reiterated. Interlinkages included major environmental challenges interlinked through systemic interactions and feedback and through policy and technology trade-offs. They also included environmental and development challenges interlinked through complex interactions between human society and the natural environment. Various countries highlighted the need to assess the interlinkages between environmental degradation and issues such as transport, poverty, demographic pressure, trade and gender. Such assessments were needed to underpin the integration of environmental concerns into sectoral plans and policies, and to assess their social and economic implications.

27. The recommendation from the scientific and technical meeting that a scientifically based interlinkages assessment should be developed in cooperation with multilateral environmental agreements and with other relevant actors was welcomed; it was stressed, however, that such an assessment must be focused, must address the key questions and must be related to the needs of Governments. In that connection it was considered highly desirable to map the current assessment landscape, including interlinkages, as a basis for improved understanding of current activities and for improved coordination. Such an approach should cover linkages between environment and development in the context of the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals<sup>2</sup> and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.<sup>3</sup>

### 3. Scientific credibility, legitimacy and relevance in environmental assessment processes

28. It was confirmed that scientific credibility would be enhanced by engaging the best scientific expertise to undertake independent, peer-reviewed assessments, taking into account regional balance.

29. Sound assessments must be based only on reliable data; for most environmental issues, however, data quality and quantity needed to be improved. A key challenge, particularly in developing countries, was to improve the collection, management, analysis and sharing of reliable environmental data through innovative, cost-effective approaches, enabling countries to manage their environmental resources better and participate effectively in international environmental assessments.

<sup>2</sup> See A/56/326 and A/58/323.

<sup>3</sup> *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publications, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 2, annex.

30. Interaction between science and policy was seen as essential to ensure legitimacy and relevancy in environmental assessment processes. Such interaction could be achieved through more effective intergovernmental and multistakeholder consultations.

31. Indigenous and local knowledge was identified as an important resource that must be protected, managed and incorporated in assessments as appropriate.

#### 4. **Cost-effectiveness, cooperation and strengthening of existing institutions**

32. It was emphasized that cost-effectiveness, cooperation and strengthening of existing institutions and multilateral environmental agreements must be improved. Regional consultation, cooperation and networking was seen as critical to linking assessments across differing scales and to strengthening information-sharing.

33. Greater consideration should be given to analysing the direct, indirect and opportunity costs of environmental degradation in relation to social and economic planning.

#### 5. **Developing-country participation and capacity-building**

34. There was strong support for improving national capacities in developing countries for data collection and analysis and for environmental monitoring and integrated assessment. Specific requirements included development of institutional capacities, staff training, and the transfer of appropriate technologies and methodologies.

35. The need to increase the number of scientists able to understand policy-making processes and provide policy-relevant advice to decision-makers at the relevant levels was recognized.

36. There was a call for greater involvement of developing-country scientists and research institutions in international environmental assessments.

### B. **Question 2: How are the United Nations Environment Programme and other organizations currently meeting those assessment needs?**

37. The UNEP role in environmental assessments was commended, with specific reference to:

- (a) The bottom-up and consultative approach used by the Global Environment Outlook;<sup>4</sup>
- (b) Thematic assessments, such as for chemicals, including mercury in particular; trade; post-conflict situations; water and biological diversity;
- (c) The World Resources report;<sup>5</sup>
- (d) Support to regional assessments such as the Africa Environment Outlook,<sup>6</sup> North America's Environment,<sup>7</sup> and the GEO report for Latin America and the Caribbean;<sup>8</sup>
- (e) The UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre;<sup>9</sup>

38. The role of United Nations agencies and other institutions in environmental assessments, especially those associated with the atmosphere, climate and oceans, were noted and commended, particularly the parts played by WMO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and ICSU.

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.unep.org/GEO/>.

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.unep.org/unep/state.htm>.

<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.unep.org/aeo/>.

<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.na.unep.net/publications/NA/geo-na.php3>.

<sup>8</sup> See <http://www.rolac.unep.mx/geoalc/English/english.htm>.

<sup>9</sup> See <http://www.unep-wcmc.org/>.

## 1. Assessment of existing environmental challenges

39. The key role of UNEP in sponsoring, participating in and implementing existing international assessments, such as the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Global Environment Outlook, the Global International Waters Assessment (GIWA) and the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment project was widely recognized.

40. Many other organizations, including United Nations bodies, international financial institutions, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, scientific and academic institutions, the private sector and think tanks also played key roles in conducting and supporting environmental assessments. It was suggested that UNEP could offer an umbrella for coordination by taking periodic stock of ongoing environmental assessment activities, while avoiding duplicating, complicating or interfering with existing mechanisms where those were working well.

## 2. Assessment of interlinkages

41. Although some attempts had been made to assess the interlinkages between environment and development, and between the various environmental challenges, greater attention needed to be given to the considerations identified under question 1 above, and those could also be integrated into the Global Environment Outlook process.

42. Full use should be made of the competence and expertise available within all relevant United Nations agencies, intergovernmental organizations, other organizations and stakeholders in environmental assessments.

## 3. Scientific credibility, legitimacy and relevance in environmental assessment processes

43. Although UNEP and other organizations were addressing those concerns, greater attention needed to be given to the considerations identified under question 1. For example, the data issue was identified as a key component underpinning scientific credibility, and more needed to be done to improve collection, analysis and sharing of information.

44. The outcome of the Earth Observation Summit,<sup>10</sup> held in Washington D.C. on 31 July 2003, and the continuing work of the ad hoc Group on Earth Observations, established by the Summit, offered opportunities to improve environmental assessment and monitoring.

## 4. Cost-effectiveness, cooperation and strengthening of existing institutions

45. Much scope existed for improved cooperation with other United Nations agencies and with convention secretariats, as well as with regional ministerial forums, to maximize synergies and take advantage of economies of scale through effective utilization of mechanisms such as the Environmental Management Group<sup>11</sup> and Earthwatch.<sup>12</sup>

## 5. Developing-country participation and capacity-building

46. The important role of UNEP in capacity-building was noted, particularly that of collaborating centres in developing countries through the Global Environment Outlook process. That role should be linked, however, to the intergovernmental strategic plan for technology support and capacity-building to be presented to the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum at its eighth special session, in March 2004.<sup>13</sup>

47. The role of UNEP in collaborating with centres of excellence in developing countries, the twinning of institutions from the North and the South and encouraging South-South cooperation were seen as an important function that needed further strengthening. In that regard, the need for increased qualitative and quantitative capacity on the part of UNEP regional and outposted offices was seen as important.

<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.earthobservationsummit.gov/>.

<sup>11</sup> See <http://www.nyo.unep.org/emgl.htm>.

<sup>12</sup> See <http://earthwatch.unep.net/index.php>.

<sup>13</sup> See also Governing Council decision 22/17 I.

**C. Question 3: What options exist with respect to meeting any unfulfilled needs that fall within the role and mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme?**

48. Many of the options for strengthening the scientific base of UNEP set forth in the synthesis report were re-emphasized. It was noted that those options could be mutually supportive.

49. There was general consensus that the scientific base of UNEP assessment activities needed to be strengthened, while remaining within the Programme's mandate, bearing in mind the conclusions and recommendations set forth under questions 1 and 2 above. It was recognized that many of the recommendations implied additional activities for UNEP to implement and that such additional activities could not be achieved within current staffing and budget allocations.

50. Specific reference was made to the recommendations from the meeting of scientific and technical experts with respect to strengthening the scientific credibility of the Global Environment Outlook process. Measures that could be taken included:

- (a) Strengthening the linkages with other assessments and the international scientific community;
- (b) Improving the quantity, quality and accessibility of environmental data;
- (c) A further strengthening of the scientific peer review process for the Global Environment Outlook;
- (d) Strengthening and expanding the network of collaborating centres with additional institutions of high scientific credibility in all regions.

51. The efforts of UNEP in capacity-building in environmental research, monitoring and assessment was seen as vitally important and must be strengthened and expanded at national, subregional and regional levels. Such efforts should be taken into account in the development of the strategic plan for technology support and capacity-building requested by the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum in its decision 22/17 I. Measures that could be taken included:

- (a) Strengthening capacity for environmental research, data collection and analysis;
- (b) Strengthening of the assessment and monitoring capacities and expertise of UNEP;
- (c) Strengthening cooperation and support to national, subregional and regional institutions, including through scientific exchanges and establishing environmental and interdisciplinary information networks;
- (d) Strengthening cooperation with and support to regional bodies and initiatives for the assessment and early warning of emerging environmental issues, particularly within the context of regional frameworks such as NEPAD and other regional and subregional initiatives;
- (e) Strengthening the regional and subregional presence of UNEP, where appropriate, for more effective and comprehensive environmental assessments;
- (f) Further strengthening the scientific credibility and expanding the collaborative assessment and monitoring structures of the Global Environment Outlook and other UNEP assessments with collaborating centres, at all levels, including those of developing countries and of countries with economies in transition;
- (g) Strengthening the awareness of policy-makers of the value of environmental research for decision-making;
- (h) Support for assessments of environmental issues of regional and subregional importance, including support provided through collaborating centres;
- (i) Promotion of coherent partnership approaches to capacity-building and mobilization of resources for development of methodologies, training and institutional training

arrangements for assessment, monitoring and data collection, including the use of satellite information.

52. It was noted that the Executive Director of UNEP, in follow-up to the conclusions and recommendations under questions 1 and 2 above, might outline the draft characteristics of a possible assessment of interlinkages. It was noted that, to be practical, interlinkage assessments must be focused.

53. The consultation confirmed the findings in the synthesis report regarding the present differences in views concerning the establishment of an intergovernmental panel on global environmental change.

54. The need to strengthen existing mechanisms in a coherent fashion was emphasized. Options for strengthening the scientific base of UNEP might include:

- (a) Setting assessment priorities within the context of the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in the form of a coherent environmental assessment partnership framework;
- (b) Promoting cooperation and synergy between intergovernmental organizations, multilateral environmental agreements and regional environmental forums, in particular through more efficient use of existing mechanisms;
- (c) Exploring the requirements for interactive mechanisms for strengthening the interface between science and policy;
- (d) The Executive Director to convene scientific advisory bodies, possibly drawing upon the experience, expertise and resources of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel of the Global Environment Facility to follow up the conclusions and recommendations of the consultation;
- (e) Strengthening cooperation with United Nations bodies, international financial institutions, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, scientific and academic institutions, the private sector and think-tanks;
- (f) Including local and traditional knowledge and experts in the processes of data collection and environmental assessment.

55. Mainstreaming and strengthening of gender perspectives in environmental assessments and early warning at all levels should be ensured.

56. The central role of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum in determining priorities for assessments was emphasized. The ability of UNEP to respond to emerging issues and natural disasters was also recognized. Many additional topics were suggested for consideration, particularly water-related topics.

## **V. Adoption of the report**

57. The consultation agreed that the report would be finalized by the secretariat, working in consultation with the Rapporteur and, when finalized, would be circulated to all participants.

## **VI. Closure of the meeting**

58. After the customary exchange of courtesies, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 6.45 p.m. on Thursday, 15 January 2004.

## **Annex I**

# **Intergovernmental consultation on strengthening the scientific base of the United Nations Environment Programme**

**Nairobi, 14–15 January 2004**

## **Agenda**

1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda.
2. Organization of work:
  - (a) Election of officers;
  - (b) Organization of the meeting.
3. Consideration of the key questions on strengthening the scientific base of the United Nations Environment Programme:
  - (a) Session 1: Discussion on question 1 and related considerations: What are the likely gaps and types of assessment needs with respect to the environment and environmental change?
  - (b) Session 2: Discussion on question 2 and related considerations: How are the United Nations Environment Programme and other organizations currently meeting those assessment needs?
  - (c) Session 3: Discussion on question 3 and related considerations: What options exist with respect to meeting any unfulfilled needs that fall within the role and mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme?
4. Conclusion and recommendations.
5. Adoption of the report.
6. Closure of the meeting.

## Annex II

### Scientific and technical meeting on strengthening the scientific base of UNEP, Nairobi, 12-13 January 2004

#### Summary report presented to the Intergovernmental Consultation (14-15 January 2004) by Thomas Rosswall, Executive Director of the International Council for Science, on behalf of the participants of the scientific and technical meeting

1. About 40 representatives of scientific organizations worldwide participated in the scientific and technical meeting on strengthening the scientific base of UNEP, held at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi on 12 and 13 January 2004. The participants considered the synthesis report<sup>14</sup> on strengthening the scientific base of UNEP (Science Initiative), which synthesized responses to Governing Council decision 22/1 I A, and held in-depth discussions on those issues.
2. The following recommendations resulted from the meeting's deliberations, with the participants concluding:
  - (a) That this was an important UNEP initiative;
  - (b) That science was essential to identify environmental problems and develop solutions;
  - (c) That policy development should be based on best available knowledge; and
  - (d) That links between scientific research, monitoring, assessment and policy were essential.
3. To strengthen the scientific base of UNEP, central issues to be addressed included:
  - (a) The need for input from natural, social, engineering and health sciences;
  - (b) The need for partnerships, including those with:
    - (i) The international science community, such as ICSU and the Third World Academy of Sciences (TWAS);
    - (ii) Other components of the United Nations system, such as UNESCO;
    - (iii) Existing and planned assessments; and
    - (iv) Multilateral environmental agreements.
4. Participants concluded that the responses to the Governing Council's questions provided an excellent point of departure for UNEP. The results were important both for the scientific and the policy communities. Responses to the Governing Council's questions, especially to question 2 (a), showed some unfulfilled needs and gaps with respect to assessment and monitoring of the environment and environmental change; they are included in the five clusters of box 1 of the synthesis report.
5. The present summary report of the scientific and technical meeting focuses on two issues and makes recommendations on:
  - (a) The potential for fulfilling the aforementioned unfulfilled needs (linking them to the five clusters in box 1 of the synthesis report) and thus strengthening the scientific base of UNEP;
  - (b) Strengthening the scientific credibility of the GEO process.
6. In fulfilling some of the needs, two mechanisms were suggested:

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<sup>14</sup> UNEP/SI/IGC/2.

- (a) A targeted report concentrating particularly on the interlinkages of the drivers of change and sectors. The following points were highlighted:
- (i) The overarching nature of the Millennium Development Goals – i.e., mainstreaming environment into the development agenda;
  - (ii) The need to meet the objectives of the multilateral environmental agreements; UNEP must engage with them and establish stronger links with the secretariats;
  - (iii) The need to meet the objectives of the conventions and hence prepare such a targeted report in partnership with the conventions;
  - (iv) The need to synthesize assessment reports that already addressed some of the interlinkages (e.g., IPCC, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, the report of STAP (project-oriented), and so on);
  - (v) The need to address scientific issues that were interlinked and where there was a demand from a scientific and technical point of view;
  - (vi) The need to map and streamline the assessment landscape and to have an understanding of that landscape (e.g., that many assessments made it difficult for national Governments to deal with them); to consider also the policy landscape (the Millennium Development Goals, the European Community Specific Programme on Energy, Environment and Sustainable Development (EESD) and so on);
  - (vii) The requirement that the report should be policy-orientated, including institutional arrangement, tools, methodology and indicators to help in implementing the outcomes;
  - (viii) The need to incorporate capacity-building right from the start by involving experts and incorporating existing work, bearing in mind links to such processes as the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development;
  - (ix) The need to incorporate the idea of adaptive management and learning cycles, methodologies and data (including indigenous knowledge, quality and coverage, paying particular attention to quality control and monitoring). Responses should undergo a reality check;
  - (x) The suggestion that the UNEP Executive Director should set up an advisory committee to give focus to the issues and the process. The issues to be tackled could be based on the responses to the Governing Council's questions and would be of a global or regional nature;
  - (xi) The possible inclusion in the suggested advisory committee of representatives from the conventions, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and assessments, who would explore the focus and the process. To foster partnerships, the nominated group of experts should include representatives from the different UNEP regions, from various assessments (both completed and in progress), from international scientific institutions and from conventions; and
  - (xii) The need to link the report to the GEO process and products;
- (b) Strengthening the scientific credibility of the Global Environment Outlook process. In detail, recommendations included the following needs:
- (i) To strengthen the linkages with assessments and the international science community through appropriate organizations (such as ICSU, including its Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment (SCOPE), and the four global change research programmes);
  - (ii) To improve the review process;

- (iii) To ensure that a sufficient number of collaborative centres with high scientific credibility were involved;
- (iv) To establish collaboration on capacity-building with various institutions involved with and linked to, for example, the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, to ensure adequate capacity to undertake assessments and implement the findings.

7. As one example, it was recommended that, for the fourth GEO report process, climate change, biological diversity, desertification and land degradation interlinkages should be looked at specifically and the results fed into the envisaged interlinkages report.

8. In conclusion, it was seen as essential to strengthen the scientific base of UNEP, and that the scientific and technical meeting was only the first step in a necessary process – much more was needed. Science must become more policy-relevant, and the scientific community was ready to contribute to that goal.

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