



## SUMMARY OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONSULTATION ON STRENGTHENING THE SCIENTIFIC BASE OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME: 14-15 JANUARY 2004

The intergovernmental consultation on strengthening the scientific base of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was held at UNEP headquarters at the Gigiri complex in Nairobi, Kenya, from 14-15 January 2004. The two-day meeting was part of UNEP's implementation of decisions taken at the 22nd meeting of its Governing Council (GC) held in Nairobi from 3-7 February 2003, in particular, decision 22/1/IA on strengthening the scientific base of UNEP, which requests the Executive Director to facilitate an intergovernmental consultation in preparation for the eighth Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council (GCSS-8)/fifth Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF-5) in March 2004. Over 195 participants representing governments, UN agencies and bodies, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), and non-governmental organization (NGOs) were in attendance.

During the meeting, participants met in Plenary to discuss three questions posed in decision 22/1/IA, namely:

1. What are the likely gaps and types of assessment needs with respect to the environment and environmental change?
2. How are UNEP and other organizations currently meeting those assessment needs?
3. What options exist with respect to meeting any unfulfilled needs that fall within the role and mandate of UNEP?

The meeting also considered cross-cutting issues relating to: scientific credibility, salience, legitimacy and relevance in the assessment processes; interaction between science and policy development; the role of existing institutions; possible options including strengthening existing institutions and mechanisms and the establishment of an intergovernmental panel on global environmental change; links and sectoral integration; duplication, cooperation, complementarity and added value to the work of other assessment processes, international agencies and multilateral environmental agreements; cost-effectiveness and efficiency; and developing country participation and capacity building.

The IGC adopted conclusions and recommendations that will be used by UNEP's Executive Director in preparing his report to GCSS-8 on strengthening the scientific base of UNEP.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF STRENGTHENING THE SCIENTIFIC BASE OF UNEP

The increasing complexity and impact of trends in environmental degradation has necessitated an enhanced capacity for scientific assessment and monitoring, and for the provision of early warnings. When the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was established on the recommendation of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm in 1972, one of its main functions was to keep under review the world environmental situation, of which environmental monitoring and assessment have been a primary focus. Since 1972, UNEP has acted as the Secretariat for the UN System-wide Earth-watch and established the:

- Global Environmental Monitoring System/Water Programme (1978) to provide authoritative, scientifically-sound information on the state and trends of global inland water quality;
- the Global Resource Information Database (GRID) (1985), a global network of environmental data centers facilitating the generation and dissemination of key environmental information;
- the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, with the World Meteorological Organization (1988), to assess scientific, technical and socioeconomic information relevant for the understanding of climate change, its potential impacts and options for adaptation and mitigation; and
- the UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Center (UNEP-WCMC) (2000), as the world biodiversity information and assessment center.

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UNEP has also undertaken several global assessments, including three Global Environmental Outlook assessments (since 1995), five ozone assessments (since 1998), the Global Biodiversity Assessment (1995), the Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity Assessment (1999), the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (since 2001), the Global Marine Assessment (since 2001), the Global International Waters Assessment (2003), and the Global Mercury Assessment (2002).

**UN CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT:** In 1992, the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) reaffirmed UNEP's mandate as the lead environment programme within the UN system and supported an enhanced and strengthened role for UNEP and its Governing Council (GC). The GC was called on to continue its role with regard to policy guidance and coordination, taking into account a development perspective. UNCED also adopted Agenda 21, the action plan for implementing sustainable development, which lists 14 priority areas on which UNEP should concentrate, including: strengthening its catalytic role in promoting environmental activities throughout the UN system; promoting international cooperation; coordinating and promoting scientific research; disseminating environmental information; raising general awareness; and further developing international environmental law.

**19TH GOVERNING COUNCIL:** In 1997, the Governing Council met for its 19th session (GC-19), the first part of which took place from 27 January to 7 February, and the second part from 3-4 April, at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi. At GC-19, delegates adopted the Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of UNEP. In the Nairobi Declaration the mandate of UNEP was revitalized and expanded to include analyzing state of the global environment and assessing global and regional environmental trends, providing policy advice and early warning information on environmental threats, and catalyzing and promoting international cooperation and action based on the best scientific and technical capabilities available.

**SIXTH SPECIAL SESSION:** The first Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF-1)/sixth special session of UNEP's Governing Council (GCSS-6) took place in Malmö, Sweden, from 29-31 May 2000. Environment ministers adopted the Malmö Ministerial Declaration, which agreed that the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 should review the requirements for a greatly strengthened institutional structure for international environmental governance (IEG). In the Declaration, ministers noted that science provides the basis for environmental decision making and emphasized the need for intensified research, fuller engagement of the scientific community, and increased scientific cooperation on emerging environmental issues, as well as improved avenues for communication between the scientific community, decision makers and other stakeholders.

**INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE PROCESS:** The 21st session of the GC, held from 5-9 February 2001, in Nairobi, established the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Group of Ministers or their Representatives (IGM) to undertake a comprehensive policy-oriented assessment of existing institutional weaknesses as well as future needs and options for strengthening IEG, including strengthening UNEP's scientific

base. The IGM met five times, and reported to the Governing Council's seventh special session (GCSS-7)/third Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF-3).

**SEVENTH SPECIAL SESSION:** GCSS-7/GMEF-3 was held in Cartagena, Colombia, from 13-15 February 2002. GCSS-7 adopted the report of the IGM, which recommended that the GC/GMEF take into account emerging environmental trends and consider issues related to environmental assessment and monitoring, and early warning and emerging issues (UNEP/GCSSLVII/6, Annex I). The decision recommends that further consideration should be given to strengthening UNEP's scientific base by improving its ability to monitor and assess global environmental change including, *inter alia*, through the establishment of an intergovernmental panel on global environmental change. They also agreed that higher priority should be given to developing independent and authoritative scientific assessment and monitoring capacity for emerging issues in developing countries.

**WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:** The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) met from 26 August to 4 September 2002, in Johannesburg, South Africa. The WSSD adopted the Johannesburg Programme of Implementation (JPOI), which emphasizes the need to build greater capacity in science and technology for sustainable development. The JPOI calls for the improvement of science-based policy and decision making at all levels in order to: increase the use of local and indigenous knowledge; make greater use of integrated scientific assessments, risk assessments and interdisciplinary and intersectoral approaches; assist developing countries in developing and implementing science and technology policies; and promote and improve science-based decision making. The JPOI also calls for the establishment of regular channels between policy makers and the scientific community to request and receive science and technology advice for the implementation of Agenda 21, and for the creation and strengthening of networks for science and education for sustainable development.

**22ND SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL AND GMEF-4:** The 22nd session of the Governing Council (GC-22)/fourth Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF-4) took place from 3-7 February 2003, at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi. GC-22 concluded its work by adopting more than 40 decisions, including one on strengthening UNEP's scientific base and establishing an intergovernmental panel on global environmental change. Decision 22/1/IA establishes a process, now referred to as the "Science Initiative," which invites submissions to UNEP's Executive Director focusing on gaps and types of assessments, how UNEP and other organizations are currently meeting their assessment needs, and the options that exist for meeting any unfulfilled needs that fall within UNEP's role and mandate (UNEP/GC.22/11). The decision also requests the Executive Director to solicit views addressing, *inter alia*, scientific credibility, the interaction between science and policy development, the role of existing institutions, and avoiding duplication. The GC also requested the Executive Director to facilitate an intergovernmental consultation (IGC) in preparation for GCSS-8. The GC further requests the Executive Director to make the results publicly available and to prepare a Synthesis Report on the consultations to the GCSS-8.



### IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCIENCE INITIATIVE:

In implementing the Science Initiative, UNEP contacted 627 institutions including 197 governments, 186 IGOs, 101 NGOs and 143 scientific institutions, inviting them to provide their views on the questions posed in decision 22/1/IA. An independent analysis of responses and drafting of the Synthesis Report was carried out during October and November 2003, under the auspices of the International Council for Science's (ICSU) Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment (SCOPE). Prior to the IGC, UNEP's Division of Early Warning and Assessment (DEWA) organized a two-day meeting of leading scientific and technical experts, including representatives from selected NGOs, from 12-13 January 2004, to discuss strengthening the scientific base of UNEP in the context of the Synthesis Report and UNEP's current assessment activities.

### REPORT OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONSULTATION

UNEP Deputy Executive Director Shafqat Kakakhel opened the meeting on Wednesday, 14 January 2004, highlighting the process and relevant UNEP Governing Council decisions leading to the IGC. He noted that human pressures on the environment can lead to sudden and irreversible changes, and questioned if the international community fully understands how the earth systems are responding to such changes. He said there is a need to address the role of the environment as a provider of services that alleviate poverty and support development efforts. He underscored that one of the key issues for consideration at the IGC is the establishment of an intergovernmental panel on global environmental change, and expressed hope that the consultation would pave the way for a decision to be taken at GCSS-8.

In his address, UNEP Executive Director Klaus Töpfer underscored the importance of strengthening the scientific base of UNEP and said the Science Initiative has been a key component of the IEG process undertaken by the UNEP GC. Highlighting the central role of the Secretariats of various multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and the Global Environment Facility's (GEF) Scientific and Technical Assessment Panel (STAP), he noted the importance of collaborating with other UN agencies and bodies in undertaking assessments. He stressed the need for better information dissemination using modern information technologies, and underlined the importance of capacity building in developing countries.

**ORGANIZATION OF WORK:** Tanja Van Gool (the Netherlands) was elected as Chair of the IGC by acclamation. Petr Kopiva (Czech Republic) was elected as Rapporteur. Delegates adopted the agenda (UNEP/SI/IGC/1 and Add.1) without amendment. Noting considerable differences in the approach proposed by governments on how to strengthen the scientific base of UNEP, the US expressed concern that the organization of work includes the adoption of conclusions and recommendations. He said it may not be possible to reach agreement on such issues. Chair Van Gool responded that the conclusions and recommendations would contain all the views of delegates and that the meeting report would not necessarily be a consensus report. Chair Van Gool proposed, and delegates agreed, to establish an Open-Ended Friends of the Chair group, chaired by Andrew Kiptoon (Kenya).

This report summarizes the issues discussed during the IGC.

### CONSIDERATION OF THE KEY QUESTIONS ON STRENGTHENING THE SCIENTIFIC BASE OF UNEP

Ivar Baste, UNEP DEWA, introduced the relevant documents (UNEP/SI/IGC/2 and Add.1, and UNEP/SI/IGC/INF/1). Summarizing the Synthesis Report's main findings, he highlighted the need to assess existing and emerging environmental challenges. He said frequently mentioned assessment gaps relate to biodiversity, societal implications of ecosystem degradation, and chemical hazards. He noted the need to consider the interlinkages of environment and development challenges and stressed the urgency of ensuring scientific credibility, legitimacy and relevance in assessment processes through independence in the scientific process and extensive expert peer review. He emphasized the importance of ensuring cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness of assessment processes, and underscored the need to ensure developing country participation to ensure credibility, ownership and authority of the assessment process. On the intergovernmental panel on global environmental change, he noted divergent views on its establishment.

ICSU Executive Secretary Thomas Rosswall presented the outcomes of the scientific and technical meeting on strengthening the scientific base of UNEP, held from 12-13 January 2004, in Nairobi. He said the meeting recommended the compilation of a report linked to the Global Environmental Outlook (GEO) process, which should:

- mainstream environment into the development agenda;
- provide an overview of the assessment "landscape;"
- meet the objectives of MEAs;
- build on other assessment reports that have addressed interlinkages; and
- include capacity-building needs as an essential component.

He also said that the meeting recommended strengthening the scientific credibility of the GEO by increasing linkages with other assessments and the international scientific community, and ensuring the involvement of a sufficient number of collaborative centers with high scientific credibility.

The US noted that a study addressing interlinkages of environmental, social, and economic issues would result in a general analysis that would be "meaningless," and requested an explanation of the usefulness of such a study. Rosswall clarified that the proposal includes the suggestion that the UNEP Executive Director appoint a group of experts to guide such a process to ensure that it is focused and builds on existing work on interlinkages.

Nigeria, with Uganda and Benin, underscored the need to provide support to, and build capacity in developing countries to make use of their scientific community and strengthen their role in decision making at the national, regional and international levels. The Central African Republic said there was a need to address the links between environment and conflict. Canada called for a study reviewing completed and planned assessments to determine what role UNEP could play in this "landscape." Pakistan asked whether the scientific and technical meeting had addressed the proposal to establish an intergovernmental panel on global environmental change. Rosswall noted that the scientific community was divided on this question, and said that its priority was on the issue of interlinkages and addressing the gaps and needs in existing assessments. Egypt said the GEO process should be directed towards scientific, rather than just environmental, assessment.



**QUESTION 1: WHAT ARE THE LIKELY GAPS AND TYPES OF ASSESSMENT NEEDS WITH RESPECT TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE?**

In response to this question, delegates considered the four types of assessment needs identified in the Synthesis Report: assessment of existing environment challenges; assessment of interlinkages; scientific credibility, legitimacy, and relevance in the assessment process; and developing country participation and capacity building.

**Assessment of existing environmental challenges:** On assessing existing environmental challenges, Egypt called for establishing codes for data collection, standardization and harmonization, and highlighted the need for assessments regarding environmental changes, correcting environmental damage, and costs of environmental damage. Ireland, on behalf of the EU, highlighted the need for assessments on consumption and production, ecosystem services, chemicals, and the role of environment, trade, poverty and transport in supporting sustainable development. Norway emphasized knowledge gaps relating to biodiversity, including lack of data on biodiversity benefits to society, and said further assessments on hazardous chemicals are needed.

Cuba, Kenya and Togo expressed support for optimizing existing organizations and structures to assess international environmental challenges. The US identified data collection and use at national and regional levels as primary gaps and highlighted the need for innovative, low-cost technologies for collecting, assessing and sharing data. France emphasized the importance of cross-cutting and interdisciplinary assessments. Kenya underscored the need for participation by scientists, decision makers and local stakeholders, and noted that assessments must be written in simple and easily understandable language.

Zimbabwe called for greater involvement of local communities in the compilation of environmental reports. Panama said there is a need to harmonize environmental policy with macro-economic policy. Benin underscored the need to include assessments of the costs of environmental change. Cameroon called for an assessment on the role of traditional knowledge in promoting biodiversity conservation. China addressed the need to prioritize activities in addressing the gaps and assessment needs outlined in the IGC Synthesis Report. The Czech Republic underscored the need for reliable indicators on consumption patterns.

**Assessment of interlinkages:** On assessment of interlinkages, Norway stressed the importance of examining interlinkages between biodiversity and climate change. Tanzania and Uganda highlighted the need to examine interlinkages between environment and trade, and, with the Central African Republic and Iran, urged assessing interlinkages between environment and conflict. Uganda stressed the need for assessing water quality, and with the Gambia, poverty and environment. The EU called for an assessment on environment and health. The Gambia stressed the need for assessments on environment and gender. Italy stressed the need to include land degradation and desertification issues when considering interlinkages, as well as in the GEO-4 process.

Hungary said the interface between social, environmental, and economic issues requires more analysis, particularly in the areas of chemicals, environmental security, health and trade. Kenya suggested examining interlinkages between environmental impacts, human health and ecosystems resulting from water and

soil pollution. Niger stressed the importance of interlinkages between poverty and soil degradation, Zimbabwe between poverty and environment, and Cameroon between forests and poverty. Brazil emphasized the importance of examining the social and economic aspects of environment and development. The Gambia emphasized the need to strengthen the quality of data collection, and Austria stressed the importance of assessing interlinkages between water and agriculture, and addressing environmental and social vulnerability. Pakistan highlighted the need to assess the interlinkages between environment and development, and stressed the importance of a coordinated approach at the intergovernmental level. The US expressed caution over interlinkages assessments.

**Scientific credibility, legitimacy, and relevance in the assessment process:** On scientific credibility, legitimacy and relevance in the assessment process, Cuba and Iran stressed the importance of increased participation of developing country scientists. Hungary said that inadequate methodologies, gaps in monitoring, and inadequate data have often led to poor assessments. Kyrgyzstan emphasized the need for an improved methodological basis and the harmonization of scientific approaches. He underscored the importance of using existing scientific resources and institutions.

Australia said there is a need to address the role of the GEO process in giving clear guidance on policy matters at the national and regional levels. Uruguay highlighted the need for access to relevant scientific data. Kazakhstan called for the development of data information systems and databases at the national, subregional and regional levels. Austria stressed that progress must be made towards fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and noted that lack of data cannot be an excuse for lack of action. The EU called for an interdisciplinary approach, which is more comprehensive and balanced than approached used in existing assessments.

**Developing country participation and capacity building:** Regarding developing country participation and capacity building, Nigeria called for a focus on practical efforts at the national level. The Gambia underscored the need to include more scientists from developing countries in assessment processes, and Guam and Papua New Guinea stressed the importance of regional participation. Tanzania emphasized the need to advance technological development and, with the Central African Republic and Suriname, stressed the importance of technology transfer to developing countries. Tanzania underscored the importance of information management in order to increase the provision of information at the national and local levels. Togo urged support for national pilot assessment schemes to strengthen developing countries' institutional capacities, and Mauritius called for prioritizing the needs of SIDS for building assessment capacity. Zambia called for establishing remote sensing centers in developing countries, and building capacity for biotechnology research. Cuba emphasized the need to extend GEO collaborating centers into developing countries.

**QUESTION 2: HOW ARE UNEP AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS CURRENTLY MEETING THOSE ASSESSMENT NEEDS?**

In response to this question, several delegates underscored the importance of strengthening the role of regional and subregional groups in the assessments. Others addressed the impor-



tance of regional assessments, collaboration between centers of excellence, and the strengthening of regional and subregional capacity for data collection and assessment.

Many delegates commended the work of the UNEP GEO process, and addressed the need to increase UN inter-agency coordination and cooperation on related assessments and assessment needs, including capacity building and technology transfer.

The EU emphasized the importance of UNEP's work on early warning and assessment, and suggested increasing cooperation between the GEO and the GMEF. He said more work is needed to achieve the timeliness and effectiveness of multi-agency assessments, while avoiding duplication of efforts. Peru called for moving from discussion to action, and proposed focusing on the topic of water and related cross-cutting issues. Saudi Arabia expressed support for improving environmental management in developing countries. Sweden suggested that UNEP continue examining the relationship between affluence and environmental degradation, and proposed that policy options arising from GEO be more expressly stated. Uganda said that UNEP should assist developing countries in preparing national assessment reports, and called for strengthening the assessment capacities of UNEP's regional offices. Norway noted that strengthening global observation systems should become a priority, and encouraged UNEP to cooperate more closely with other intergovernmental agencies and MEAs. The US noted that GEO-3 was too broad and contained "speculations" and "scientifically-unfounded opinions."

The UK emphasized that work undertaken through the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management and Global Marine Assessment process would help identify current gaps in relation to these issues. He also underscored the importance of assessments undertaken by the UNEP-WCMC. He welcomed the proposal for an analysis of the assessment "landscape." The Gambia said UNEP should include a capacity-building component into its assessment process, and Ghana stressed that UNEP should play a central role in all assessments undertaken by UN agencies and bodies.

Togo noted that establishing a list of existing assessments would help UNEP to identify capacity-building needs for developing countries. Finland urged the need to strengthen follow-up activities and collaboration with scientific institutions. On synergies, he said UNEP should play a catalytic role in addressing this issue. Noting the lack of attention to issues regarding observation, France, with UNESCO, drew attention to the work of the Global Earth Observation, and called for UNEP to play an active role in this process. UNESCO addressed assessment activities undertaken by its Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and International Hydrological Programme, and emphasized the need for inter-agency coordination and cooperation on environmental assessments.

Nigeria suggested that national agencies involved in research activities be involved in UNEP's scientific activities. China suggested that UNEP provide GEO regional collaboration centers with additional assistance, strengthen its leadership role, and coordinate with other international institutions. Canada expressed caution with regard to interlinkages assessments. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) emphasized a need for greater coordination between UN agencies, NGOs and governments.

### **QUESTION 3: WHAT OPTIONS EXIST WITH RESPECT TO MEETING ANY UNFULFILLED NEEDS THAT FALL WITHIN THE ROLE AND MANDATE OF**

**UNEP?** In response to this question, delegates discussed the role of the GEO, establishing subregional offices, the intergovernmental panel of global environmental change, and other related issues.

**The role of the GEO:** Canada proposed strengthening the GEO by: improving linkages with existing assessments and international processes; enhancing its review process; involving collaborative centers with high scientific credibility; collaborating with relevant institutions for capacity building; and improving data gathering, monitoring, quality, accessibility and processing. With Uganda, he expressed support for the establishment of an advisory committee for the GEO process, and, with the EU, highlighted the importance of UNEP outlining the assessment "landscape." Japan proposed that UNEP make better use of existing structures by improving the GEO through greater participation of developing countries, increased emphasis on capacity building, and heightened use of regional expertise.

**Establishing subregional offices:** Jordan said UNEP's human and financial capacity must be increased to enable it to strengthen links with local and international academic institutions. He underscored the need to include socioeconomic aspects in assessments, and, with Uganda, emphasized the importance of strengthening UNEP's regional offices. Uganda called for improving environmental information systems, in particular environmental information networks by increasing financial support. He said interlinkages between UNEP and subregional entities must be improved, and, with Kyrgyzstan, called for greater involvement of regional experts in assessment processes. He noted the need for training, logistic support and cost-effective technologies in building capacity.

Mauritius, on behalf of the African Group, proposed the establishment of a forum to enable Africa to assess its needs. He stressed the need to increase UNEP's financial capacity to address these issues. Tajikistan, with Kazakhstan, the Central African Republic and Panama, called on UNEP to strengthen its role in their regions by establishing subregional offices. Tajikistan proposed that UNEP cooperate more closely with the Committee for the Protection of the Aral Sea.

Kazakhstan underscored the importance of regional and subregional information networks. Slovakia emphasized the importance of science education, training and local human resources to achieve sustainable technology transfer, and suggested that this can be accomplished by popularizing science and promoting science diplomacy. He said UNEP should reorient part of its activities toward this end.

Ghana emphasized the need for UNEP's regional offices to provide technical and scientific support, including for environmental data gathering, monitoring and evaluation, data analysis and synthesis, and technology identification. Citing examples such as the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme and the Caspian Sea Convention, UNEP Executive Director Töpfer emphasized the importance of defining subregional priorities and approaches.

**Intergovernmental panel of global environmental change:** Argentina, Brazil, the US, Uganda, Tanzania, Venezuela, Japan, Cuba and Australia spoke against establishing an intergovernmental panel. Argentina suggested that as an alternative, UNEP



should evaluate its activities relating to environmental knowledge generation and transfer, and strengthen successful ones. The US said the proposed panel would be counterproductive since it would politicize the issue of scientific assessments, and suggested that the GC identify priorities and direct UNEP to undertake targeted assessments. He said that programmes within UNEP that need to be strengthened include DEWA, GRID and the Division of Trade, Industry and Environment.

Cuba highlighted the need to prioritize the use of existing institutions, strengthen coordination, as well as regional offices and programmes at the national level. Australia urged the “sharpening” of information provided through existing assessments. The Republic of Korea said it was premature to take a decision on the intergovernmental panel. He said there was a need to focus on strengthening existing mechanisms, enhancing coordination and avoiding duplication.

Kyrgyzstan, Hungary, Norway, Germany, France and the EU expressed support for establishing an intergovernmental panel on global environmental change. Norway proposed that UNEP explore using members of the GEF STAP as an entry point for establishing the intergovernmental panel, and that during a pilot phase, panel meetings could be held back-to-back with STAP meetings. Germany recommended that an intergovernmental panel could link the activities of MEAs, and underscored the importance of prioritizing issues. France said the benefits of the panel’s multi-disciplinary assessment would be greater than the costs involved in its establishment. The EU said that the establishment of an intergovernmental panel and the strengthening of existing structures are not mutually exclusive. He proposed that an expert panel deliberate on the possible scope of such a panel.

Referring to the lack of consensus on establishing an intergovernmental panel, China proposed to first develop existing structures and conduct a study into the use of such a panel. She suggested that UNEP provide more support to the regional GEO collaboration centers, and called on the international community to provide additional financial and technical support for capacity building in developing countries.

**Other related issues:** Norway suggested that UNEP develop an outline for an assessment on interlinkages, including a proposal for an advisory panel to support the assessment, for discussion at GCSS-8. Egypt proposed a combination of strengthening and enhancing coordination with existing organizations, coupled with the option of a clearinghouse on monitoring and assessment. Italy called for UNEP to address synergies between the CCD, CBD and UNFCCC. Suriname called on UNEP to support training programmes in research methods and analysis.

Tanzania suggested that UNEP provide guidance on coordination in assessment and monitoring, and set research priorities. He called for strengthened interlinkages with MEAs, as well as with regional and subregional centers and offices.

Argentina emphasized that UNEP should focus on capacity building in developing countries, increase cooperation with other organizations, and work towards standardizing information and classification systems. Peru emphasized focusing efforts on the theme of water, and highlighted the importance of establishing information networks and, with Panama, of involving the private

sector. Iran proposed to implement relevant institutional changes within UNEP, including minor institutional reforms, and establishing links with existing environmental institutions.

Senegal and others addressed the need for capacity-building links between UNEP and NEPAD’s environmental initiative. Cameroon said that UNEP could cooperate in assessments identified in the Ministerial Declaration of the Africa Forest Law Enforcement and Governance conference, held from 13-16 October 2003, in Yaounde, Cameroon. Zambia said UNEP should support African countries in obtaining and utilizing satellite data. Togo suggested that once the GC has identified assessment priorities, it should support African countries in identifying regional priorities. Algeria and Ghana stressed the need to continue the dialogue on strengthening UNEP’s scientific base under the auspices of the African Ministerial Conference on Environment.

Sweden said UNEP should focus on strategic approaches to chemicals management, the relationship of MEAs and trade, and on capacity-building needs. He said that governments are failing to fulfil their responsibilities to act on the basis of existing information. Kenya said UNEP should enhance linkages with existing national and regional initiatives and institutions, and Togo expressed support for strengthening existing mechanisms and efforts.

Highlighting the need for increased interagency coordination, Pakistan proposed that the Environmental Management Group coordinate all assessment-related work of the UN, and report regularly to the GMEF. The UK supported strengthening DEWA and the UNEP-WCMC and urged governments to fulfill their financial contributions to UNEP. While supporting UNEP’s involvement in capacity building, he said this should be addressed under UNEP’s capacity-building and technology transfer strategy to be discussed at GCSS-8. Finland said cooperation with scientific institutions should be based on the principle of supply and demand. Nigeria underscored the need for the full involvement of scientists and research institutes, and other relevant agencies in UNEP’s work. Benin stressed the need for synergies and better coordination between UNEP, the FAO and the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research on issues of agriculture and food security.

### **IGC CONCLUSIONS**

Chair Van Gool presented the draft conclusions of the key questions on strengthening the scientific base of UNEP. She said the draft conclusions reflect the views expressed by delegates during the IGC. The conclusions incorporate recommendations to the UNEP Executive Director for inclusion in his report on strengthening the scientific base of UNEP, which will be presented to GCSS-8. She noted that the points raised in the IGC largely converged with the findings of the Synthesis Report, and that many of the assessment needs were reiterated.

**DISCUSSION:** Several delegates proposed minor amendments, which were adopted. Delegates discussed at length the recommendation regarding the intergovernmental panel on global environmental change, which notes that there are divergent views with respect to the establishment of the panel. The EU, opposed by the US, requested inserting text noting that “at the present time” there are divergent views on the panel’s establishment. The US, with Egypt and the Russian Federation, said there was no need to elaborate the reasons for and against establishing a panel, since the



current text reflects the difference of opinion. Ghana proposed text noting the “need to continue the consultation,” while Pakistan, supported by Brazil, proposed “keeping the matter under review.” The EU, opposed by the US, suggested referring to the need for an expert review on the establishment of the panel. Delegates agreed to text noting the present differences in views on establishing the panel.

**CONCLUSIONS: Question 1:** In the conclusions on the assessment of existing environmental challenges, the IGC notes the need to establish long-term assessment priorities at the international and national levels in support of adaptive environmental monitoring and management, and assess data collection and monitoring methodologies, including cost-effectiveness, standardization and interoperability of data sets to facilitate exchange of environmental information. The IGC emphasizes the need to assess interlinkages, including major environmental challenges, and notes that such assessments are needed to underpin the integration of environmental concerns into sectoral plans and policies, and their socioeconomic implications. The IGC also welcomes the recommendations from the scientific and technical meeting for UNEP to develop a scientifically-based interlinkages assessment in cooperation with MEAs and other institutions, and to map the current assessment “landscape.”

On scientific credibility, legitimacy and relevance in the assessment process, the IGC confirms that scientific credibility will be enhanced by engaging the best scientific expertise to undertake independent and peer reviewed assessments. Noting that sound assessments can only be based on reliable data, the IGC notes that a key challenge for developing countries is to improve the collection, management, analysis and sharing of environmental data through innovative and cost-effective approaches. The IGC also recommends that the interaction between science and policy is essential in order to ensure legitimacy and relevance in the assessment process, and that indigenous and local knowledge needs to be protected, managed and incorporated in assessments.

On cost effectiveness, cooperation and strengthening of existing institutions, the IGC underscores that cost-effectiveness, cooperation, and strengthening of existing institutions and MEAs need to be improved.

On developing country participation and capacity building, the IGC identifies the need for the greater involvement of developing country scientists and research institutions in the international environmental assessments. The IGC also notes support for improving national capacities for data collection, analysis, monitoring and integrated environmental assessments.

**Question 2:** In the conclusions, the IGC commends UNEP’s role in undertaking environmental assessment. The IGC notes that UNEP could offer an umbrella for coordination by taking periodic stock of ongoing environmental assessment activities. The IGC also recommends that the competence and expertise of relevant UN agencies, IGOs and other organizations and stakeholders should be fully utilized in environmental assessments. The IGC recognizes UNEP’s important role in capacity building, and notes that this should be linked to the intergovernmental strategic plan for capacity building and technology transfer. The need for increased qualitative and quantitative capacity of UNEP regional and out-posted offices is also recognized as an important component in strengthening the scientific base of UNEP.

**Question 3:** In the conclusions, the IGC notes that options for strengthening UNEP’s scientific base could be mutually supportive, but cannot be implemented within current budget allocations. The IGC identifies measures for strengthening the scientific credibility of the GEO process, including: strengthening the linkages with other assessments and the international scientific community; improving the quantity, quality and accessibility of environmental data; further strengthening its peer review process; and strengthening and expanding the collaborating center network with more institutions of high scientific credibility in all regions. The IGC also notes that UNEP’s efforts in capacity building in environmental research, monitoring and assessment could be improved by, *inter alia*, strengthening UNEP’s:

- capacity for environmental research, data collection and analysis;
- capacity and expertise in assessment and monitoring;
- cooperation and support to national, subregional and regional institutions;
- cooperation with, and support to, regional bodies for the assessment and early warning of emerging environmental issues;
- regional and subregional presence; and
- promotion of coherent partnership approaches to capacity building.

The IGC further notes that the UNEP Executive Director could outline the draft characteristics of a possible assessment of interlinkages, and that practical interlinkages assessments need to be focused. The IGC confirms the existence of present differences in views regarding the establishment of an intergovernmental panel on global environmental change. It outlines options for strengthening the scientific base of UNEP, including:

- setting assessment priorities within the context of the MDGs and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation;
- promoting cooperation and synergy between different IGOs and, in particular, MEAs, as well as regional ministerial fora;
- exploring the requirements for interactive mechanisms for strengthening the interface between science and policy;
- strengthening cooperation with UN bodies, international financial institutions, IGOs, NGOs, scientific and academic institutions, the private sector and think-tanks; and
- including local and traditional knowledge, and local experts in the process of data collection.

The IGC also notes that the mainstreaming and strengthening of gender perspectives in environmental, regional and subregional assessments and early warning should be improved.

### CLOSING SESSION

In his closing remarks, UNEP Executive Director Klaus Töpfer underscored the fact that “step by step,” UNEP has integrated scientific considerations into its programme of work and that governments have also made progress in integrating science into policymaking. In closing, Chair Van Gool thanked delegates for their constructive input to the deliberations. She closed the meeting at 6:42 pm.



## THINGS TO LOOK FOR BEFORE

### GCSS-8/GMEF-5

**INTER-REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BARBADOS PROGRAMME OF ACTION:** An inter-regional preparatory meeting for the Barbados Programme of Action will take place in Nassau, Bahamas, from 26-30 January 2004. For more information, contact: Diane Quarless, UN SIDS Unit; tel: +1-212-963-4135; fax: +1-917-367-3391; e-mail: Mauritius2004@sidsnet.org; Internet: <http://www.sidsnet.org>

**SEVENTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CBD AND FIRST MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE BIOSAFETY PROTOCOL:** CBD COP-7 will be held from 9-20 February 2004, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. It will be followed by the first Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, which will be held from 23-27 February 2004. For more information, contact: CBD Secretariat; tel: +1-514-288-2220; fax: +1-514-288-6588; e-mail: secretariat@biodiv.org; Internet: <http://www.biodiv.org>

### 14TH MEETING OF THE CITES PLANT

**COMMITTEE:** This meeting, organized by the CITES Secretariat, will take place from 23-27 February 2004, in Windhoek, Namibia. For more information, contact: CITES Secretariat; tel: +41-22-917-8139; fax: +41-22-797-3417; e-mail: [cites@unep.ch](mailto:cites@unep.ch); Internet: <http://www.cites.org>

**THEMATIC WORKSHOP ON SYNERGIES FOR CAPACITY BUILDING UNDER INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS ADDRESSING CHEMICALS AND WASTE MANAGEMENT:** Organized by UNITAR in collaboration with several international organizations, this workshop will take place from 1-3 March 2004, in Geneva, Switzerland. For more information, contact: UNITAR Training and Capacity Building Programmes in Chemicals and Waste Management; tel: +41-22-917-1234; fax: +41-22-917-8047; [cwm@unitar.org](mailto:cwm@unitar.org); Internet: <http://www.unitar.org>

**ICRC-5:** The fifth session of the Interim Chemical Review Committee (ICRC-5) of the Rotterdam Convention is scheduled for 2-6 March 2004, in Geneva, Switzerland. For more information, contact the Joint Interim Secretariat: Niek van der Graaff, FAO; tel: +39-6-5705-3441; fax: +39-6-5705-6347; e-mail: [niek.vandergraaff@fao.org](mailto:niek.vandergraaff@fao.org); or Jim Willis, UNEP Chemicals; tel: +41-22-917-8111; fax: +41-22-797-3460; e-mail: [chemicals@unep.ch](mailto:chemicals@unep.ch); Internet: <http://www.pic.int>

### APEC SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY MINISTERS

**MEETING:** This Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation ministerial-level event will convene under the theme of "Connecting Science, Policy and Business" from 8-12 March 2004, in Christchurch, New Zealand. For more information, contact: the meeting secretariat; tel: +64-3-962-2260; fax: +64-3-962-2264; e-mail: [info@apepscience2004.org.nz](mailto:info@apepscience2004.org.nz); Internet: <http://www.apepscience2004.org.nz>

### METHYL BROMIDE TECHNICAL OPTIONS

**COMMITTEE MEETING:** The Montreal Protocol's Technical Options Committee dealing with methyl bromide will discuss exemptions for the use of this ozone-depleting substance from 15-19 March 2004, in Lisbon, Portugal. For more information,

contact: Ozone Secretariat, UNEP; tel: +254-2-62-3850; fax: +254-2-62-3601; e-mail: [ozoneinfo@unep.org](mailto:ozoneinfo@unep.org); Internet: <http://www.unep.org/ozone/>

### BRIDGING SCALES AND EPISTEMOLOGIES:

**LINKING LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND GLOBAL SCIENCE IN MULTI-SCALE ASSESSMENTS:** This conference, part of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment process, will be held from 17-20 March 2004, in Alexandria, Egypt. For more information, contact: Carolina Katz Reid; tel: +60-4-626-1606 ext.507; fax: +60-4-626-5530; e-mail: [c.reid@cgiar.org](mailto:c.reid@cgiar.org); Internet: <http://www.millenniumassessment.org/2/about.meetings.bridging.aspx>

**EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE MONTREAL PROTOCOL:** An extraordinary Meeting of the Parties will take place from 24-26 March 2004, in Montreal, Canada. For more information, contact: Ozone Secretariat; tel: +254-2-62-3850; fax: +254-2-62-3601; e-mail: [ozoneinfo@unep.org](mailto:ozoneinfo@unep.org); Internet: <http://www.unep.org/ozone>

### EIGHTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UNEP

**GOVERNING COUNCIL/FIFTH GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM:** The eighth Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council/fifth Global Ministerial Environment Forum will take place from 29-31 March 2004, in Seoul, Republic of Korea. For more information, contact: Beverly Miller, Secretary for UNEP Governing Council; tel: +254-2-623431; fax: +254-2-623929; e-mail: [beverly.miller@unep.org](mailto:beverly.miller@unep.org); Internet: <http://www.unep.org>