

Improving International Environmental Governance (IEG): The world needs your creative ideas and opinions!

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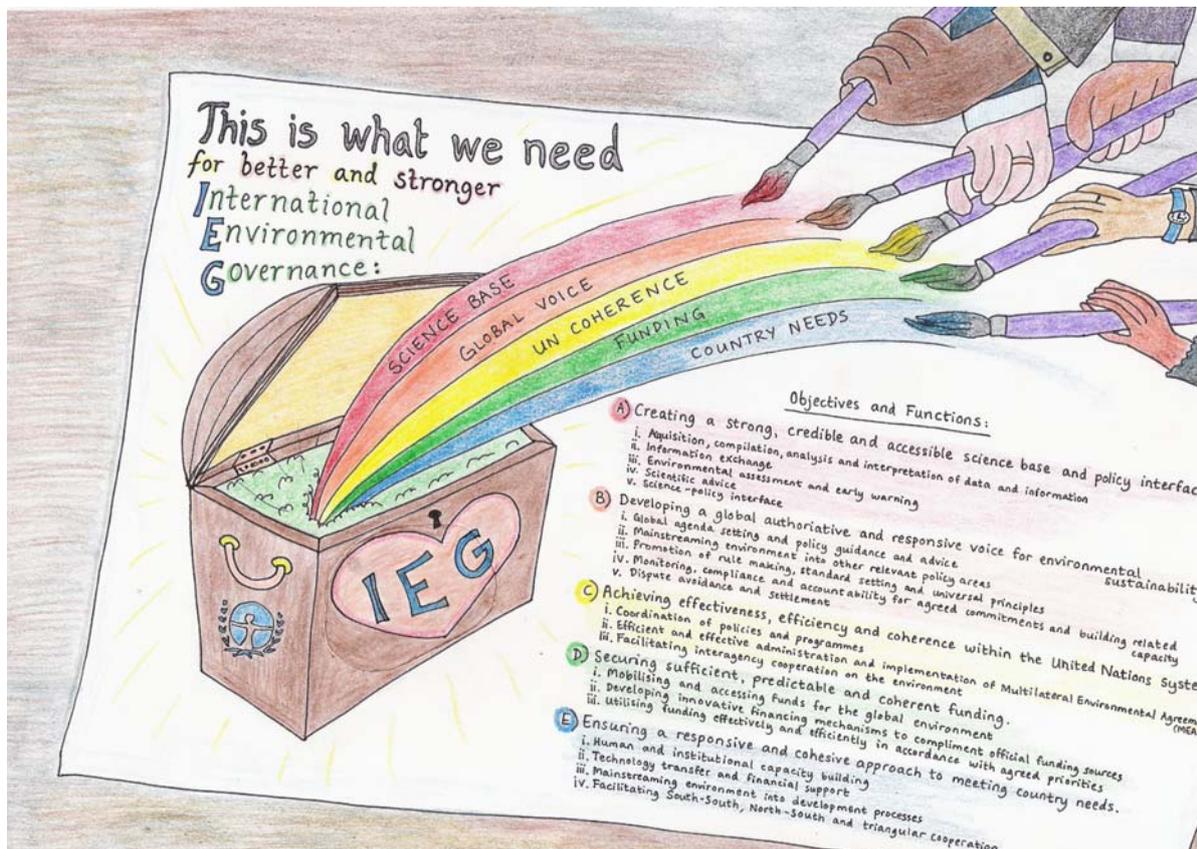
Since the global environmental problems were discovered, governments have tried to solve them by creating a system of international environmental governance. Despite all attempts, the situation is still getting worse and humanity is eroding the very foundations of which our civilization depends. It's clear that the current system of international architecture has failed to give the world what it needs. Environment ministers from around the world recognize that today's international environmental governance is characterized by overlap, fragmentation, and resource deficiencies, and to continue like this is not an option.

Right now, you have an important opportunity to help bring about a sustainable future. Governments have agreed that it's necessary to make a broad reform of international environmental governance, but nobody knows yet how to do it. What should the new IEG system look like? The world needs your opinions and ideas!

If you want to help, please read through this document to get an overview of where governments are in the process and what ideas they currently have. Then get creative and think about what changes you believe in and would like to see in the way governments address environmental issues on a global level. Please send all your thoughts and comments on or before 1 June 2010 to Sara Svensson (sara.svensson@faltbiologerna.se), Children & Youth representative in the UNEP Major Groups Facilitating Committee. All ideas from Children & Youth globally will be compiled into one document to be delivered to UNEP for consideration. Thank you very much!

Background - the Belgrade process

In the UNEP Governing Council in 2009, ministers launched a formal political process (the so-called [Belgrade process](#)) to consider all possible options for reforming the international environmental architecture. A consultative group of ministers came together in Serbia in July and in Italy in October 2009. They agreed on five different objectives and underlying functions that are needed in an improved system of International Environmental Governance. See picture:



This is what we need
for better and stronger
International
Environmental
Governance:

SCIENCE BASE
GLOBAL VOICE
UN COHERENCE
FUNDING
COUNTRY NEEDS

Objectives and Functions:

- A. Creating a strong, credible and accessible science base and policy interface
 - i. Acquisition, compilation, analysis and interpretation of data and information
 - ii. Information exchange
 - iii. Environmental exchange
 - iv. Environmental assessment and interpretation of data and information
 - v. Scientific advice
 - vi. Science-policy interface
- B. Developing a global authoritative and responsive voice for environmental sustainability
 - i. Global agenda setting and policy guidance and advice
 - ii. Mainstreaming environment into other relevant policy areas
 - iii. Promotion of rule making, standard setting and universal principles
 - iv. Monitoring, compliance and accountability for agreed commitments and building related capacity
 - v. Dispute avoidance and settlement
- C. Achieving effectiveness, efficiency and coherence within the United Nations System
 - i. Coordination of policies and programmes
 - ii. Efficient and effective administration and implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements
 - iii. Facilitating interagency cooperation and implementation of the United Nations System
- D. Securing sufficient, predictable and coherent funding.
 - i. Mobilising and accessing funds for the global environment
 - ii. Developing innovative financing mechanisms to complement official funding sources
 - iii. Utilising funding effectively and efficiently in accordance with agreed priorities
- E. Ensuring a responsive and cohesive approach to meeting country needs.
 - i. Human and institutional capacity building
 - ii. Technology transfer and financial support
 - iii. Mainstreaming environment into development processes
 - iv. Facilitating South-South, North-South and triangular cooperation

To know the objectives and functions is a good first step. What's needed now is to design the best models and forms for achieving them. In 2010 a group of ministers or high-level representatives will continue the process for improving IEG. They will meet in Bogotá in Colombia in early July and in Helsinki in Finland in November and discuss different options.

Achim Steiner, executive director of UNEP and advisor to the consultative group, has been tasked with providing a background document that the ministers or high-level representatives will use as a starting point for discussion in their next meeting. At the moment, the draft document contains a number of different options suggesting how each of the five objectives from the Belgrade process can be met.

Children and youth and other members of civil society are now invited to comment on the draft, share our opinions on the different options and suggest additional good ideas that we would like the consultative group to consider. Nobody knows yet which models or options are the best ones, so we need to find the answers together. Please get involved, share your thoughts and think out of the box! Help make sure that we implement the options with best potential to support future life on our planet!

When assessing the different options, think for example about the following questions:

Urgency: Which of the suggested options would need to be developed and implemented in the short-term (1-2 years from now), medium term (2-5 years) or long term (5 years and beyond)?

Resource intensity: How much time, people and finances would be needed to launch and maintain the option? Is it worth it?

Redundancy and complementarity: How can different options be combined with each other in order to provide all the functions we want? Which options would complement each other and which would be overlapping? Are some of the options unnecessary?

And finally: Do you have additional ideas? Other models that would be good to use? Did you come up with the idea based on something that exists today or existed before, or is it something totally new? Why do you think that your model would help solve the environmental problems in the world?

Please e-mail your thoughts to sara.svensson@faltbiologerna.se.

The suggested options so far are:

a) Create a strong, credible and accessible science base and policy interface

1. Establish an intergovernmental body for governing the environmental science-policy interface, in order to meet the medium to long-term knowledge needs of countries and the IEG regime.
2. Create an intergovernmentally legitimate, policy relevant and scientifically credible, multi-scaled assessment process for keeping the impact of environmental change on human well-being under review.
3. Create a multi-scaled and multi-thematic global information network of national, international and independent scientific expertise for keeping the impact of environmental change on human wellbeing under review and issue early warnings. The network would be facilitated by a web based facility for sharing of "live" information with the support from an interagency cooperation arrangement.
4. Establish an independent research institute for development and coordination of research at the international level in support of the IEG regime.
5. Other ideas?

b) Developing a global authoritative and responsive voice for environmental sustainability

1. Create a body that would set minimum global standards on global environmental issues and regional standards for regional based environmental issues. Standards would be based on agreed science and guided by the precautionary approach. The body would have a capacity development and technical assistance arm to assist developing countries achieve standards.
2. Establish an intergovernmental review mechanism for reviewing the national implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and other international environmental obligations.

3. Establish a global policy organization with universal membership to set, coordinate, and monitor the global environmental agenda.
4. Link global environmental policy making with global environmental financing.
5. Develop a general agreement for environmental sustainability that would integrate different international institutions linked to the environment within a common framework, under a single undertaking and under the authority of a single conference.
6. Other ideas?

c) Achieving effectiveness, efficiency and coherence within the United Nations system

1. Clustering secretariat functions and common service – establish a mechanism for global, overall coordination among existing Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), with one mechanism having innovative tasks that are not performed by MEAs Secretariats individually, and without prejudice to their decision-making and budgetary independence. This would include joint MEA institutional structures, including: 1. Secretariats, 2. Legal financial and conference services, 3. Reporting, 4. Scientific structures, 5. Programmatic structures, 6. Knowledge management and IT.
2. Create a member driven 'coordination council' composed of a representative group of countries, not secretariats, to ensure the legal authority, hierarchy and a power base to evoke cooperation amongst the MEAs that have their individual conference of the parties. In order to address the diverse issues of the MEAs, the Council could have committees based on MEAs clusters.
3. Establish UN system wide medium term strategy for the environment, coordinating all environmental activities for the UN.
4. Other ideas?

d) Securing sufficient, predictable and coherent funding

1. Widen the donor base, e.g. establish a mechanism for receipt of private/philanthropic donations.
2. Establish a joint management mechanism for all major trust funds for the environment with equal roles for project selection, appraisal and supervision of environment-related activities, in accordance with the respective spheres of expertise.
3. Provide budget with both assessed contributions from member states: i) paid on the basis of equal shares of all member states for a given percentage of overall budget, ii) determined on a proportional basis, taking into account the system of assessed contribution on the UN scale.
4. Establish one funding organisation for global environment and sustainable development work that has the authority to allocate and track use of resources according to environmental needs across the UN system.
5. Set and monitor and review a global standard committed percentage of GNP that each country would exercise nationally for environmental sustainability. Formula could be based on the investment in natural capital required to maintain national environmental sustainability.
6. Other ideas?

e) Ensuring a responsive and cohesive approach to meeting country needs

1. Develop a dedicated fund or facility to implement the Bali Strategic Plan.
2. Establish country operational offices for environment in developing countries.
3. Establish environment-development country teams and/or desk in existing intergovernmental offices in developing countries around the world.
4. Establish regional committees of developing countries representatives with a plenary body providing technical expertise for integrated implementation for policy guidance, national level MEAs obligations, etc. Country representatives would bridge the gap between the regional offices and the national environment ministries within member states.

5. Transfer the task of capacity-building, funding, and compensation functions of the international institutional system to an independent organisation that pays more attention to the special needs of international environmental policy.
6. Develop an overarching framework for capacity building and technical assistance for the operational activities of MEAs, UN agencies and International Financial Institutions.
7. Establish a South-South/North-South technology transfer centre based on a clearing house system. The centre could also employ a CDM like mechanism that would enable countries to meet any MEA obligation by investing in a technology transfer project in developing countries.
8. Other ideas?

More information

All the different options suggested above are described in more detail in the draft background paper called [Options on Broader Reform of International Environmental Governance](#) by UNEP's Executive Director Achim Steiner.

An information note on [Environment in the UN System](#) gives an overview of the existing system for international environmental governance and what gaps there are.

An information note on [United Nations Specialised Agencies and United Nations Programmes](#) explains the difference between different kinds of institutions within the UN system, which can be useful to know when thinking about whether UNEP should be changed into another kind of institution.

Children & Youth,

Please send your questions and contributions to Sara Svensson (sara.svensson@faltbiologerna.se), UNEP Major Groups Facilitating Committee, global representative for Children & Youth.

If you are part of another major group,

Please send your contributions directly to civil.society@unep.org or find the right person for you to contact here:

<http://environmentalgovernance.org/featured/2010/05/important-solicitation-of-civil-society-input-to-intergovernmental-process-on-international-environmental-governance/>

Thank you!