



THE 20TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME GOVERNING COUNCIL 1-5 FEBRUARY 1999

The 20th session of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Governing Council (GC) will meet at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, from 1 to 5 February 1999. This is the first session of the Governing Council to be held since the adoption of the Nairobi Declaration, the UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) to review the implementation of Agenda 21, and the appointment of Klaus Töpfer as UNEP Executive Director.

The session will include a three-day technical segment followed by a two-day high-level segment. Ministers and senior government officials from over 100 countries, as well as representatives from environmental nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), UN Agencies, international organizations, business and industry, are expected to attend the week-long meeting. During the technical segment, delegates are expected to consider the state of the environment, emerging policy issues, coordination and cooperation within and outside the UN, governance of UNEP, followup to the UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolutions, results of the UNGA's consideration of the recommendations of the United Nations Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements, linkages among and support to environmental and environment-related conventions, preparations for the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-7), the environment fund and administrative and other budgetary matters. Topics to be addressed in preparation for the CSD include sustainable tourism, oceans and resources and issues associated with the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States.

The high-level segment will also address the results of the UNGA's consideration of the recommendations of the United Nations Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements, linkages among and support to environmental and environment-related conventions and preparations for CSD-7. Throughout the week there will also be special side-events on sustainable tourism, chemicals and global telecommunications, as well as the launch of, and briefings on new UNEP initiatives and special reports.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL

In 1972, the United Nations Environment Programme was established as a result of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm from 5-16 June 1972. The conference created an action plan for environmental policy, an environment fund, a declaration of 26 principles on human environment and the Governing Council and Secretariat of UNEP.

Established to provide a forum for the international community to address major and emerging environmental policy issues, the Governing Council meets in general on a biennial basis with special sessions convened in between. It consists of 58 States who serve three-year terms on the following basis of equitable geographic distribution: 16 African States; 13 Asian States; 6 Eastern European States; 13 Western European and Other States; and 10 Latin American and Caribbean States. The Governing Council reports to the UNGA and is charged with: promoting international environmental cooperation and recommending policies to this end; providing policy guidance for the direction and coordination of environmental programmes in the UN system; reviewing the world environment situation; and promoting the contribution of relevant scientific and other professional communities to the acquisition, assessment and exchange of environmental knowledge and information and to the technical aspects of the formulation and implementation of environmental programmes within the UN system.

In addition to monitoring and assessing the state of the environment and disseminating the information to governments and NGOs, the Governing Council's achievements include the initiation of negotiations on many major environmental conventions, including the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade (PIC Convention).

UNCED: The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) reaffirmed UNEP's mandate and called for an enhanced and strengthened role for UNEP and its Governing Council. The Governing Council was called on to continue to play its role with regard to policy guidance and coordination, taking into account the development perspective. Agenda 21 also listed 14 priority areas on which UNEP should concentrate, *inter alia*, 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: Initially, the 19th session convened from 27 January - 7 February 1997. However, the meeting was suspended on the final day when delegates could not agree on a proposal for the creation of a high-level committee to provide policy guidance to UNEP. As a result, officials from 34 countries met in Geneva on 21 March 1997 and decided to create a new multinational committee to mediate the dispute and offer

This issue of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* © <enb@iisd.org> is written and edited by Changbo Bai <changbo@sprint.ca>, Ian Fry <ifry@pegasus.com.au>, Laura Ivers <laurai@iisd.org>, Leila Mead <leila@interport.net>. The Editor is Pamela Chasek, Ph.D. <pam@iisd.org> and the Managing Editor is Langston James "Kimo" Goree VI <kimo@iisd.org>. Digital editing by Andrei Henry <ahenry@iisd.ca>. Logistics by Molly Rosenman <mrosenman@iisd.ca>. The Sustaining Donors of the *Bulletin* are the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Government of Canada (through CIDA), the United States (through USAID) and the Swiss Agency for Environment, Forests and Landscape. General Support for the *Bulletin* during 1999 is provided by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), the German Federal Ministry of Environment (BMU) and the German Federal Ministry of Development Cooperation (BMZ), the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the European Community (DG-XD), the Ministries of Environment and Foreign Affairs of Austria, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Environment of Norway, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Environment of Finland, the Government of Sweden, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Ministry for the Environment in Iceland. Specific support for coverage of GC-20 has been provided by UNEP. The *Bulletin* can be contacted at this meeting at +254 2 623381 in room S-230, by e-mail at <enb@iisd.org> and at other times at tel: +1-212-644-0204; fax: +1-212-644-0206. IISD can be contacted by e-mail at <info@iisd.ca> and at 161 Portage Avenue East, 6th Floor, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 0Y4, Canada. The opinions expressed in the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IISD and other funders. Excerpts from the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* may be used in non-commercial publications only and only with appropriate academic citation. For permission to use this material in commercial publications, contact the Managing Editor. Electronic versions of the *Bulletin* are sent to e-mail distribution lists and can be found on the Linkages WWW server at <http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/>. The satellite image was taken above Nairobi (c)1999 The Living Earth, Inc. <http://livingearth.com>. For information on the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin*, send e-mail to <enb@iisd.org>.



advice on UNEP's future. The 19th session resumed at UNEP Headquarters from 3-4 April 1997 where delegates decided to establish a High-Level Committee of Ministers and Officials (HLCOM) as a subsidiary organ of the Governing Council.

Delegates then adopted the Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of UNEP (decision GC19/1/1997). The Nairobi Declaration states that UNEP has been and should continue to be the principal UN body in the field of the environment; reaffirms the role of UNEP as the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the UN system and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment; reaffirms the mandate of UNEP as set out in 1972 and further elaborated by Agenda 21; and sets out to improve the governance structure of UNEP by strengthening regionalization and decentralization, increasing participation of major groups and developing a cost effective and politically influential intersessional mechanism. The Nairobi Declaration also established the HLCOM with the mandate to: consider the international environmental agenda and to make reform and policy recommendations to the Governing Council; provide guidance and advice to UNEP's Executive Director; enhance UNEP's collaboration and cooperation with other multilateral bodies, including the environmental conventions and their secretariats; and help mobilize adequate and predictable financial resources for UNEP.

The HLCOM consists of 36 members, elected by the Governing Council from members of the UN and its specialized agencies. Members will serve for two years and represent regions as reflected by the current structure of UNEP's Governing Council. The Committee will convene meetings at least once a year in Nairobi and may also convene elsewhere in connection with major international environmental meetings. The President of the Governing Council and the Chair of the UNEP Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) will be invited to attend. The European Community and other regional intergovernmental economic organizations may attend. The Nairobi Declaration also, with a view toward strengthening the CPR, revised the mandate of the CPR. The CPR will: review, monitor and assess the implementation of decisions of the Governing Council on administrative, budgetary and programme matters; review UNEP's draft programme of work and budget; review reports requested of the Secretariat by the Governing Council on the effectiveness, efficiency and transparency of the Secretariat's work; and prepare draft decisions for consideration by the Governing Council based on inputs from the Secretariat. The Nairobi Declaration was formerly endorsed at the UNGASS in June 1997.

FIFTH SPECIAL SESSION: The Governing Council most recently convened in May 1998, at its fifth special session. This session adopted decisions on the evaluation of UNEP's management and administrative support; revitalization, reform and strengthening of UNEP; the contributions of UNEP to CSD-7; freshwater; the PIC Convention; the Global Environment Facility; and land degradation. The session decided to review the status of the ongoing reform of UNEP at the 20th session in order to provide the 55th session of the UNGA with its policy conclusions on institutional arrangements within the UN system and the role of UNEP in that context. The special session also confirmed the member States elected to the HLCOM.

UN TASK FORCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS: At the 51st session of the UNGA, the Secretary-General issued the results of a review of UN activities entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a program for reform" (A/51/950). In the section on environment, habitat and sustainable development, the report reviewed developments since UNCED, including the proliferation of new actors in the field, the emergence of the

CSD as an important policy forum, the augmented environmental capacities in UN organizations and the disappointing response to the needs of developing countries for new and additional resources. The report concluded that there was a need for a more integrated systematic approach to policies and programmes throughout the range of UN activities in the economic and social field through mainstreaming the UN's commitment to sustainable development.

In order to initiate this process, the Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements was established under the chairmanship of the Executive Director of UNEP. In 1998, the conclusions and recommendations of the task force were forwarded to the 53rd session of the GA in the report of the Secretary-General on environment and human settlements (A/53/463). The report contained recommendations for: the establishment of an Environmental Management Group; an annual ministerial-level global environmental forum; universal membership of the Governing Council; and several measures to further incorporate and involve civil society. Though there has been no formal decision by the GA as yet, it is expected that the GA President will convene an open-ended working group in the near future to further discuss the report's recommendations.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

OPENING PLENARY: Plenary will convene at 10:00am to elect officers and adopt the agenda and the organization of work of the session. UNEP Executive Director Klaus Töpfer is expected to deliver the policy statement of the Executive Director. László Mikló (Slovak Republic) is expected to succeed Arnoldo Jose Gabaldon (Venezuela) as the Governing Council President.

PLENARY: Following the opening session, Plenary will consider the state of the environment, emerging policy issues, coordination and cooperation within and outside the UN, including NGOs and Governance of UNEP.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE: The COW will convene following the opening session to consider results of the UNGA's consideration of the United Nations Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements and programme, the Environment Fund and administrative and other budgetary matters. Delegations will be invited to pledge contributions to the Environment Fund for 1999 and future years.

ELECTRONIC PRODUCTS FROM THE EARTH NEGOTIATIONS BULLETIN

Free subscriptions for electronic delivery of the following products is available at:

<http://iisd.ca/enb/email.asp>

Earth Negotiations Bulletin: Daily and summary reports from meetings held by the acronyms UNFCCC, CBD, WGBS, CSD, POPS, PIC, CMS and UNCCD

/linkages/journal/: A quarterly report on recent meetings, upcoming events, précis of newly published academic pieces, topical guest articles and a calendar of events related to environment and sustainable development

/linkages/buzz/: A weekly e-mail with news on recent additions to the ENB WWW site, *Linkages* at <http://www.iisd.ca>

CLIMATE-L: An e-mail list for information on the UNFCCC process, including Climate News (weekly news scan of the world's news stories on climate change)