



UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS WEDNESDAY, 3 FEBRUARY 1999

On the third day of the 20th Session of the UNEP Governing Council (GC), marking the last day of the technical segment, the Committee of the Whole (COW) and the Plenary met in parallel sessions throughout the day, with the COW convening in an evening session that lasted into the morning hours. The COW considered draft decisions on programme, the Environment Fund and administrative and other budgetary matters. The Plenary addressed preparations for CSD-7 and began consideration of draft decisions. The Working Group on budget related issues met in morning and evening sessions.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair Leonardo Arellano opened discussions on the subprogramme of GEF and Administrative Matters, and explained that the action plan on complementarity will be forwarded to the next GEF Council meeting. Ahmed Djoghlaif, GEF Coordinating Office, introduced the action plan on complementarity between UNEP activities under the GEF (UNEP/GC.20/44). He highlighted: complementarity between UNEP and GEF activities based on additionality, synergy and integration; and a time frame for implementation of the work programme. EGYPT, on behalf of the African Group, supported strengthening UNEP's role in GEF activities, with a view to increasing GEF activities in Africa. The EU and INDONESIA supported the action plan. The US characterized UNEP's efforts to determine its best role in GEF as symbolic of the foresight and direction of the Executive Director, and expressed faith that this will carry over to UNEP's progressive emergence in other areas. INDONESIA said UNEP should continue to strengthen collaboration with GEF on freshwater, climate change, biological diversity and desertification. CHINA proposed that, *inter alia*: the share of UNEP funds within GEF be increased; UNEP conduct activities at the national level; UNEP support developing countries action on the environment through GEF; and UNEP's role within GEF be strengthened.

AUSTRALIA queried what was being done to address the year 2000 computer bug problem (Y2K). The Secretariat noted possible problems at UNON and action underway to prevent them.

The COW then began consideration of draft decisions (UNEP/GC.20/L.5/Add.1). The draft decision on functioning of regional offices and proposed measures for the strengthening of regionalization and decentralization was adopted without amendment. In consideration of the draft decision on functioning of specialized offices of UNEP, the EU suggested trade issues be given priority, together with cleaner production and technology transfer. Delega-

tions adopted the draft decision with an additional reference to issues of trade and the environment as proposed by the EU and ZIMBABWE.

In considering the draft decision on implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, the EU proposed a new operative paragraph urging the Executive Director of UNEP to complete establishment of the coordinating office. CANADA proposed strengthening of the Regional Sea Programme. The EU also proposed consideration of other ongoing processes in cooperating with other agencies. The draft decision is still pending due to the need for further consultation on different proposals. The draft decision on establishment of a Regional Seas Programme for the East Central Pacific was adopted with minor amendment, referring to government support for the draft action plan and corresponding legal instruments. Based on a joint amendment by AUSTRALIA, FRANCE, the US, JAMAICA, JAPAN and MEXICO, delegates adopted the draft decision on the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), endorsing enhanced cooperation within the UN.

Regarding the draft decision on the Mercure satellite communication system, CUBA proposed adding text noting the technical and financial contributions of Austria, Belgium, Spain, Switzerland and the UK in developing the project. SWITZERLAND noted that the positive feeling of the general debates on the system was not reflected in the draft decision. The UK requested deletion of text supporting utilization of the development dividend for extending Mercure access to developing countries and countries with economies in transition. This decision remains under consideration.

On the draft decision on freshwater, ETHIOPIA, supported by KENYA, preferred that the decision "endorse" rather than "take note of" a proposed framework for UNEP's freshwater strategy. AUSTRALIA and EGYPT opposed, and TURKEY proposed deleting reference to the strategy. ETHIOPIA proposed broadening language calling for UNEP to take into account the work related to freshwater of national governments to include the work of other UN agencies and IGOs. COLOMBIA moved to delete reference to the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, noting that the marine environment is not freshwater. Regarding partnerships between countries, COLOMBIA qualified this by inserting "taking into account national priorities." EGYPT noted that the decision as drafted would enlarge the UNEP mandate beyond that of the environment, and said bringing complicated issues under the decision could open a Pandora's Box for UNEP. The EU proposed adding reference to the role CSD-6 played in defining UNEP's role in freshwater. This decision remains under consideration.



In the draft decision on support to Africa, regarding strengthening of UNEP's assessment and monitoring to assist African countries, the EU asked to remove reference to assistance "in the field," noting that this is the task of development organizations, not UNEP. The COW adopted this decision.

On the draft decision on measures to reduce the risks from a limited number of hazardous chemicals, the EU proposed adding text welcoming further work at the 21st GC. The US cautioned against this modification, as it is not clear that anything will need to be discussed then, and that the reference would necessitate a debate on chemicals and attendance of chemicals experts. He noted that a meeting of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS) between now and then might clarify whether chemical expert discussions would be necessary and expressed reluctance to prejudge. Chair Arellano noted that only thirteen of twenty-two decisions had been addressed and called for a spirit of compromise. The COW reconvened at 10:00 pm and continued consideration of draft resolutions into the early morning hours.

Svein Aage Mehli (Norway), Chair of the Working Group on budget related issues, updated the COW on its work and presented the draft decisions it prepared. The COW adopted several of these draft decisions, including decisions on: status of implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services; management of trust funds and counterpart contributions; cost of administering trust funds and counterpart contributions; revision of financial rules of the Environment Fund; Environment Fund: financial report and audited accounts for the biennium 1996-1997; report of the ACABQ on the Environment Fund budgets; and functioning of the Ombudsman Unit. The draft decision on stable, adequate and predictable funding for UNEP was adopted with minor amendment. The Working Group continued consideration of a draft decision on the proposed programme budget of UNEP in the evening.

PLENARY

The Plenary discussed preparations for CSD-7. Shafqat Kakakhel, Deputy Executive Director of UNEP, introduced the thematic issues for CSD-7: small island development states (SIDS); oceans management; sustainable tourism; and sustainable production and consumption, and noted where UNEP could provide an environmental dimension to CSD-7. JoAnne DiSanno, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, encouraged the GC to identify a clear role for UNEP and to ensure that it had adequate resources to provide scientific and technical advice.

SIDS: NEW ZEALAND welcomed work on SIDS. MALTA, on behalf of SIDS, JAMAICA and NORWAY, highlighted the vulnerabilities of SIDS, particularly with respect to climate change.

Oceans Management: NEW ZEALAND, with IRAN, TUNISIA, JAPAN, BURKINA FASO, CANADA, the EU, AUSTRALIA, JAMAICA, BANGLADESH, NORWAY and MALTA, on behalf of SIDS, strongly endorsed UNEP's Regional Seas Programme. AUSTRALIA opposed using the programme as a framework for the development of regional commissions for the sustainable development of oceans, as their mandate goes beyond that of the Regional Seas Programme. NEW ZEALAND encouraged UNEP's role in enhancing its work in relation to the environmental implications of unsustainable fishing. JAPAN and ICELAND suggested that fisheries management be undertaken by FAO. The US encouraged cooperation between UNEP and FAO. BURKINA FASO and the EU endorsed UNEP's work on land based sources of marine pollution, with NEW ZEALAND calling for accelerated action. ICELAND and NORWAY supported a clearinghouse mechanism on pollution. ICELAND stressed

increased emphasis on the threat of POPs to the marine ecosystem and regional cooperation. NEW ZEALAND, with JAPAN, highlighted UNEP's work on ICRI, while INDONESIA highlighted unprecedented coral bleaching. IRAN called for focused work on addressing pollution within closed and semi-closed seas. CANADA emphasized coastal zone management.

Sustainable Tourism: IRAN urged caution in standardizing guidelines for sustainable tourism at the regional and national level and encouraged tourist education at destinations. BURKINA FASO urged partnerships in the field of tourism and environment and called for UNEP to provide research on ecotourism. CANADA urged synergies with the Convention on Biological Diversity's work on sustainable tourism. The EU said UNEP should continue its work on voluntary initiatives, codes for the tourism industry and integration into relevant conventions. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA stressed, *inter alia*, distribution of benefits to local residents and technical and financial support from UNEP.

Sustainable Production and Consumption: NEW ZEALAND welcomed work on sustainable production and consumption and encouraged market-based incentives. CANADA underscored the need for UNEP to refocus its work towards sustainable consumption strategies. The EU emphasized cleaner production and innovative ways of organizing and fulfilling consumption needs and consumption patterns.

On all items, the EU called for information on the financial implications of UNEP's work. In response to the Plenary's comments, Jacqueline Aloisi de Larderel, UNEP, took note of appeals for UNEP to play a more active role in sustainable consumption. Jorge Illueca, UNEP, noted that the Regional Seas Programme is a priority for UNEP and that fisheries are an integral component of ecosystems associated with the Programme.

On relationships with other conventions, the US noted UNEP's ability to offer support to environmental conventions, and called for more assistance to help governments build capacity to comply with conventions. On the state of the environment, ISRAEL emphasized scarcity of resources, particularly water, and noted cooperation with Palestinians to preserve the environment.

In the afternoon, the Plenary adopted draft decisions submitted by the negotiating group on the programme for the development and periodic review of environmental law beyond the year 2000 (UNEP/GC.20/L.2/Rev.1) and on issues arising from UNGA resolutions (UNEP/GC.20/L.8/Rev.1).

IN THE CORRIDORS

Many delegates recognize familiarity with the perennial budget question of "who pays and how much?" This year however, some countries are testing the waters with a proposed broadening of the funding base. Other delegates are questioning what this means. Presumably, all will be revealed at the High-Level Segment.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: The High-Level Segment will open at 10:00 am with opening remarks from GC President László Miklós, Klaus Töpfer and Republic of Kenya President Daniel Arap Moi. Plenary will discuss the results of the UNGA consideration of the Secretary-General's report on Environment and Human Settlements, and preparations for CSD-7.

SIDE EVENTS: A Roundtable on Telecommunications will be held from 12:00-2:00 pm in Conference Room 1, and a Panel Discussion on Sustainable Tourism will take place from 4:30-6:30 pm in Conference Room 1.