



## UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 4 FEBRUARY 1999

The fourth day of the 20th session of the Governing Council (GC) marked the beginning of the High-Level Segment. Ministers and senior government officials began the day with the inauguration of a memorial garden at the United Nations Office in Nairobi (UNON) in honour and remembrance of victims of the Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam bomb blasts. They were then welcomed by Republic of Kenya President Daniel Arap Moi, UNEP Executive Director Klaus Töpfer and GC President László Miklós. In the afternoon, the Plenary convened to hear statements from Ministers and hold general policy debate. The Committee of the Whole (COW) convened briefly in the afternoon to consider the draft decision on the programme budget. The Plenary convened in the evening to consider the draft decisions adopted by the COW.

### HIGH-LEVEL MINISTERIAL SEGMENT

GC President László Miklós said an integrated approach is the only way to achieve sustainable development, emphasizing social forces, environmental conditions and impacts on health and well being as critical. He identified the main priorities for discussion as: UNEP's contributions to CSD-7; adoption of programme, Environment Fund and other budgetary matters; and recommendations to the UNGA's regarding the Secretary-General's report on environment and human settlements.

Dr. Töpfer highlighted the UN's growing presence in Africa and Africa's abundance of untapped natural and human resources, and made an appeal to assist with capacity building. He identified, *inter alia*, the sustainable development of cities and the fight against desertification, and pointed to global environmental conventions and the promotion of environmentally friendly technology as responses. He said the Millennium Assembly would address, *inter alia*, means of transforming a destructive throw away society into a life cycle economy. He underscored the importance of enhanced coordination of environmental conventions, and said UNEP would provide assistance when asked by the respective conferences of parties. He cited an integrated work programme and functional structure for UNEP along with operationalizing the Nairobi Declaration as the basis for all endeavours. He emphasized that creating synergies between UNEP and Habitat requires the full use of UNON and strategic use of available resources. He underscored for UNEP, *inter alia*: continuity and change; an increased regional focus; and a voice for all stakeholders.

President of the Republic of Kenya Daniel Arap Moi urged the GC to approach matters in a balanced manner that would result in practical solutions for pressing environmental problems, and to consider the challenge of consumption and production patterns. He noted, *inter alia*, action on POPs; Africa's untapped wealth of

natural resources; and regional cooperation in Africa. He highlighted the recent elevation of UNON and his government's support for the implementation of UNEP's mandate. He then declared the High-Level Segment officially open.

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Delegates listened to statements by Ministers and senior government officials on, *inter alia*: general principles of environmental protection; UNEP's reform and revitalization; UNEP's programme priorities; and budget related issues.

Regarding UNEP's reform and revitalization, many delegates supported the recommendations of the Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements. SRI LANKA, MAURITANIA and others supported restructuring and strengthening UNEP. KENYA, the UK, NAMIBIA and CHINA supported the strengthening of UNON. THAILAND, CHINA and the UK supported the establishment of an Environment Management Group (EMG), but said the criteria for member selection needs further discussion. The UK hoped the EMG would be a force for environmental integration. HUNGARY emphasized interagency coordination and consideration of an annual ministerial meeting. The EU called on ministers to participate in UNEP's decision making and, with CHINA, endorsed an annual ministerial forum. SWITZERLAND urged the GC to convey a message to the UNGA emphasizing the revitalization of UNEP.

THAILAND, TANZANIA and others supported strengthening regional offices, and SAMOA supported regional arrangements. INDIA called for clearly defined responsibilities for regional offices, taking developing country concerns into account. The UK, CHINA and THAILAND identified coordination with other conventions as a priority, and noted that UNEP could contribute scientific, technical and legal support. The EU said the proposal of an umbrella convention needs further consideration.

On financial matters, KENYA, MEXICO, DENMARK and POLAND called for increased financial contributions to support UNEP. The UK emphasized adequate, stable and predictable resources particularly through the Environment Fund. CHINA said voluntary contributions should be the primary source. SWITZERLAND supported the UNEP programme and budget priorities, and called for broadening the financial base. The UK called for concise and clear advice on the budget, with specific details on output, progress reports and timely statements on achievements. SWEDEN, HUNGARY and the UK noted their contributions to the Environment Fund.

SWITZERLAND, CHINA and THAILAND supported further strengthening UNEP's role in the GEF. Mohamed El-Ashry, GEF CEO, noted a true spirit of cooperation between GEF and UNEP,



and emphasized that UNEP be strengthened and revitalized. INDIA welcomed input from the Scientific Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) of GEF for project implementation at the country level.

On the topic of trade and environment, the UK urged UNEP to participate in the upcoming WTO high-level segment on trade and the environment, and said UNEP should command respect on an equal footing with the WTO. He also supported the development of a "toolbox" for assessing the environmental impacts of trade liberalization. The NETHERLANDS supported linking trade and environment, and SWITZERLAND supported dialogue on environment and trade. DENMARK said strong provisions for social and environmental protection and human rights were preconditions for free trade.

On chemicals, many countries, including the EU and POLAND, supported the POPs negotiations. HUNGARY highlighted the recent Rotterdam Convention as a major step forward to controlling international trade in toxic substances. DENMARK supported a chemicals convention to address the most hazardous chemicals, and highlighted uncontrolled chemicals dumping in the developing world. The NETHERLANDS called for a global convention on chemicals.

TANZANIA and KENYA called for strengthening capacity of developing countries and their environmental institutions. IRAN appealed to UNEP to give special emphasis to developing countries and emphasized, *inter alia*, alternative and renewable energy resources and clean energy production. SAMOA called upon UNEP to transfer technology, build capacity, create public awareness and carry out demonstration projects. GERMANY, on behalf of the EU, highlighted the integration of environment, social and economic development, and emphasized the need for UNEP to closely cooperate with other UN organizations. KENYA called for UNEP to enhance programmes in the region, and highlighted the importance of issues like forest preservation, freshwater management and monitoring. SRI LANKA noted that air pollution and water pollution are affecting the natural environment, and encouraged UNEP to provide assistance to help developing countries implement environmental conventions. INDIA emphasized geographical distribution, gender balance and interests of developing countries. The SUDAN and the UK emphasized support for Africa. NAMIBIA urged governments to embrace NGOs and the private sector as partners in development.

SAMOA welcomed UNEP's involvement in reviewing the Barbados Plan of Action on the sustainable development of SIDS, and requested that UNEP input to CSD-7 on SIDS be first circulated to SIDS governments for review. THAILAND supported strengthening the Regional Seas Programme. The UK emphasized that oceans are the "lifeline of the planet" and said that their sustainable use will help combat poverty. He urged UNEP to be a more effective source for action on oceans and supported revitalizing the Regional Seas Programme in collaboration with other organizations. HUNGARY underscored the importance of integrated water management; further regional cooperation; and close cooperation between governments, NGOs and civil society. SWEDEN identified water and its conservation as one of UNEP's most important tasks. THAILAND noted that the draft decision on ecotourism focuses only on the supply side, and encouraged elaboration of codes of conduct and the involvement of all stakeholders. The NETHERLANDS encouraged the development of a convention on environmental crimes. SWEDEN emphasized: listening to the views of youth; and empowering women to participate in decision making. On public access, DENMARK emphasized the importance of NGOs and citizens and, noting the regional conven-

tion on public access to information, called on UNEP to disseminate the value of the convention's provisions to determine applicability in other parts of the world.

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Budget of UNEP: Chair Svein Aage Mehli (Norway) of the Working Group on budget related issues explained the extensive discussions to arrive at an unbracketted text on the budget for UNEP (GC.20/L.5). He outlined the changes to the original text, highlighting, *inter alia*: harmonizing the budget with other UN bodies; broadening the funding base to include countries which have developed a greater capacity to pay; authorizing the Executive Director to prepare a \$120 million budget for the next biennium; provisionally increasing the administrative budget contingent on an increase from the UN regular budget; and authorizing the Executive Director to adjust each budget line by 20%. The budget was adopted. The EU sought clarification on whether the Environment Fund and Habitat would be reduced due to an increased administrative budget and why several positions in UNON had been upgraded. Alexander Barabanov, Chief, Division of Administrative Services, indicated that the Environment Fund would not be adversely affected, and that Habitat would be reduced by approximately \$150,000, subject to decisions of the UNGA. The three position upgrades were in parity with other UN offices.

### PLENARY

The Plenary met to consider and adopt draft decisions on: the promotion of access to information (UNEP/GC.20/L.2/Add.1/Rev.1); reform of INFOTERRA (UNEP/GC.20/L.2/Add.1/Rev.1); linkages among environmental conventions (UNEP/GC.20/L.6/Rev.1); and governance of UNEP (UNEP/GC.20/L.6/Rev.1). The Plenary also adopted several draft decisions contained in UNEP/GC.20/L.5/Rev.1 on: regional offices; specialized offices; Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities; regional seas programme for the East Central Pacific; coral reefs; PIC Convention; and Ombudsman Unit. The draft decision on the Environment Fund and administrative and other budgetary matters (UNEP/GC.20/L.5/Add.1/Rev.1) was adopted with an *ad referendum* reservation by Japan. The decisions on Global Environment Outlook and the environmental situation in the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories (UNEP/GC.20/L.1/Rev.1) were adopted. IRAN indicated that their support of this resolution did not constitute recognition of Israel. The report of the Committee of the Whole (UNEP/GC.20/L.12) was taken note of.

### IN THE CORRIDORS

Amidst the plethora of set speeches by Ministers in the High-Level Segment, some delegations were pleasantly surprised by the occasional impromptu presentation. A straw poll of delegates jointly awarded the Ministers from the UK, the Netherlands and Denmark with the "most refreshing speech award." Delegates have expressed the hope that on the last day, Ministers will throw away their texts and reflect more on the events of this meeting. Others have questioned the purpose of this "hot air" marathon, given the compressed timetable of the GC.

### THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

**PLENARY:** The Plenary will meet at 9:00 am in Conference Room 2 to continue the general policy debate focusing on the results of the General Assembly's consideration of the Secretary-General's report on Environment and Human Settlements, linkages among and support to environmental and environment related conventions, and preparations for CSD-7.