



## UNEP GC27/GMEF HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 18 FEBRUARY 2013

Delegates at the 27th session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC-27/GMEF) convened in the morning for the opening ceremony of the first Universal Session of the GC, followed by consideration of organizational matters, and a policy statement by UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner. In the afternoon, delegates convened for ministerial consultations on emerging policy issues (implementation of paragraph 88 of the Rio+20 outcome document, entitled the "The Future we Want," and General Assembly resolution 67/213). The Committee of the Whole (COW) also met in the afternoon.

### OPENING CEREMONY

Opening the first universal session of the GC, Federico Ramos de Armas, Spain, outgoing GC President, called for urgent action to change unsustainable consumption and production patterns and to move beyond Gross Domestic Product as a measure of prosperity.

Reading a message from UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Sahle-Work Zewde, Director General, UNON, *inter alia*: underscored investment in the environment and in the green economy as a "sound insurance policy" for the future we want; and highlighted UN General Assembly discussions on financial resources for UNEP from the regular UN budget.

Achim Steiner, Executive Director, UNEP, noted that delegates have the task of promptly implementing the Rio+20 outcome aspects regarding the functioning of UNEP and the design of the international agenda for cooperation on the environment pillar of sustainable development.

Describing the first universal session of the GC as "historic," Mwai Kibaki, President of Kenya, noted that the Rio+20 outcome had reaffirmed UNEP as the leading global environmental authority by adopting several decisions to strengthen and upgrade UNEP.

**ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS:** The plenary elected Hassan Abdel Hilal, Minister of Environment, Forests and Physical Development, Sudan, as GC-27/GMEF President. Ryutaro Yatsu (Japan), Antonio Otávio Sá Ricarte (Brazil) and Idunn Eidheim (Norway), were elected Bureau Vice-Presidents; and Beata Jaczewska (Poland) was elected Rapporteur.

GC-27/GMEF President Hilal highlighted the need to agree on the future participation of ministers and the institutional arrangements and capacity within UNEP; and to discuss UNEP's contribution to the post-2015 development agenda.

GC President Hilal informed delegates that the first universal session will follow the GC applicable rules of procedure and the applicable rules and practice of the General Assembly. The provisional agenda (UNEP/GC.27/1) was adopted. On the organization of work (UNEP/GC.27/1/Add.1), GC President

Hilal outlined the Executive Director's recommendations, including the establishment of a COW, a drafting group, and a working group on institutional arrangements and rules of procedure. A COW was established with Idunn Eidheim (Norway) as Chair. Luis Campuzano (Mexico) and Farrukh Iqbal Khan (Pakistan) were appointed co-chairs of the working group on institutional arrangements and rules of procedure. Delegates agreed on the GC-27/GMEF's organization of work.

### POLICY STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE

**DIRECTOR:** UNEP Executive Director Steiner highlighted the need to articulate an environmental agenda that addresses issues such as energy, employment and poverty. Steiner said the Rio+20 outcome moved that agenda forward, and noted that delegates have a clear mandate from the UN General Assembly to implement the outcome's paragraph 88 provisions and decide how the newly mandated governing body of UNEP will function. He outlined UNEP's contributions over the years, including the Rio+20 discussions on green economy, its work on black carbon as a complement to climate action, the finalization of a mercury treaty, and improved synergies in the chemicals and wastes cluster. He emphasized UNEP's increased efficiency and improved value proposition, noting the programme of work entails a modest budget increase.

### STATEMENT BY THE CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES:

H.E. Geert Aagaard Andersen (Denmark), Chair of the UNEP Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR), submitted 12 CPR draft decisions for consideration, noting bracketed text remained, including on the decision on the Consultative Process on Financing Options for Chemicals and Wastes, which is bracketed in its entirety. He said the draft decision on the green economy was bracketed because of insufficient time for its consideration.

Reiterating support for a stronger more effective UNEP, the US stressed the need to resolve structural governance issues pertaining to universal membership. She called for, *inter alia*: a review of UNEP's Strategic Framework; a clear and more defined role for the CPR; a mechanism for enhancing stakeholder participation; and addressing the frequency and effectiveness of meetings to avoid overloading UNEP's agenda. With CANADA, the US also expressed concern regarding the President of the session, noting that Sudan is currently subject to UN Security Council sanctions and therefore is not an "appropriate choice for leadership." MALAYSIA introduced a draft decision on the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Secretariat.

### MINISTERIAL CONSULTATIONS

Delegates convened for a panel discussion and a plenary dialogue. Princess Lalla Hasna, Morocco, highlighted the work of the Mohammed VI Foundation for the Protection of the Environment in promoting young people's environmental education and activities.



Francisco Gaetani, Deputy Minister of Environment, Brazil, called on the GC to prioritize a cost-effective framework and participatory decision-making, and avoid “new layers” of decision-making. On the post-2015 agenda, he said MDGs should focus on eradication of absolute poverty by 2030, and SDGs, supported by diverse funding, should help countries focus on sustainable development policies.

Wu Hongbo, UN Under Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, highlighted the role of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) as a custodian of the sustainable development agenda; the need for its close cooperation with UNEP, international financial institutions and the WTO; and its convening powers, and its potential role in monitoring progress towards SDGs.

Terezya Huvisa, Minister of State, Tanzania, highlighted the African Union’s efforts to develop regional flagship programmes for implementation of Rio+20 outcomes, and ongoing continent-wide consultations to articulate a common vision for Africa.

Rebeca Grynspan, UN Under-Secretary-General, UNDP, noted that the success of the MDGs had been achieved through mobilization of stakeholders, and the internalization of indicators and goals through planning and budgeting.

Amina J. Mohammed, UN Assistant Secretary-General, Special Advisor on Post-2015 Development Planning, remarked that the Secretary-General’s High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the post-2015 development agenda would help chart the trajectory to one set of integrated goals.

Naoko Ishii, CEO and Chair, Global Environment Facility (GEF), called for breaking down silos between: different environmental issues; environment, economic and social development issues; and international boundaries in governance of ecosystems.

Xinsheng Zhang, IUCN President, said the green economy concept should be oriented towards improving social equity, while taking into account planetary boundaries. He called on countries to be results-oriented, and for the SDGs framework to incorporate nature-based solutions.

John Knox, Independent Expert on Human Rights and the Environment, UN Human Rights Council, discussed the role of human rights when promoting environmental sustainability in the context of Rio+20. He observed that human rights law can help to inform the SDGs and fundamental rights to environmental protection.

**MINISTERIAL DIALOGUE:** On the green economy, the EU called for further steps to adopt green economy policies at all levels and for a convergence of work on the MDGs and SDGs aimed at eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development.

On implementing the Rio+20 outcome, MEXICO called for providing UNEP with the necessary tools to coordinate the environment activities of the UN system and, with IRAN, to strengthen the science-policy interface. ARGENTINA cautioned against creating a new and costly supranational body, preferring to improve on what already exists.

GERMANY asked for the creation of an ombudsperson for future generations and supported a “UN Environment Assembly.”

COLOMBIA highlighted the need to have SDGs of a universal nature and proposed the following five areas for the goals: energy, sustainable cities, water, food security and oceans. KENYA noted that the legitimacy of the reformed GC must be reflected in its designation; an enhanced role for the CPR; and annual meetings of the universal body.

#### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Amina Mohamed, on behalf of Executive Director Achim Steiner, said the COW had before it fourteen draft decisions that sought to implement the Rio+20 outcome. COLOMBIA

introduced a draft decision on oceans (UNEP/GC.27/CRP.3), stressing that it sought to give greater visibility to the need for the integrated management of oceans. Tanzania, for the AFRICAN GROUP, urged delegates to consider, *inter alia*: strengthening existing bodies rather than creating new ones; a clear roadmap for moving UNEP headquarter functions and offices to Nairobi; and establishing sub-regional offices in Africa.

**Rio+20 Implementation:** The Secretariat introduced information documents on the work of the CPR (UNEP/GC.27/INF/4), and on resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly of relevance to UNEP (UNEP/GC.27/INF/3 and INF/3/Add.1). INDIA, with the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, the US, INDONESIA and others, favored strengthening the CPR.

On stakeholder involvement, MAJOR GROUPS said they would table comprehensive principles for stakeholder participation. Ireland, for the EU and CROATIA, with AUSTRALIA, the US, CANADA, NORWAY and others stressed the importance of stakeholder involvement. On strengthening and upgrading UNEP, ARGENTINA expressed support for strengthening UNEP, but said upgrading the Programme was beyond the GC’s mandate.

BRAZIL, with INDONESIA, called for a thorough consideration of the rules of procedure, including the need to address gaps on matters like the mechanism for NGO participation.

NEW ZEALAND, with the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, SIERRA LEONE, IRAN, EGYPT and INDONESIA, called for a stronger UNEP regional presence.

THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION underlined that structural changes should neither increase bureaucracy nor place a greater financial burden on member states.

COW Chair Eidheim forwarded the discussion to the working group on institutional arrangements and rules of procedure.

**Budget and Programme of Work:** The Secretariat introduced documents on the budget and programme of work for the biennium 2014–2015 and the Environment Fund and other budgetary matters (UNEP/GC.27/9/Add.1; UNEP/GC.27/10/Add.1 and Add.2; UNEP/CG.27/11/Rev.1; UNEP/GC.27/14/Rev.1; UNEP/GC.27/INF/6 and Add 1; UNEP/GC.27/INF/7; and UNEP/GC.27/L.1).

BOLIVIA said the proposed programme of work is based on the green economy and does not accurately reflect the balanced Rio+20 outcome. NORWAY said the overall 2.7% budget increase is modest. Ireland, for the EU and CROATIA, called on UNEP’s Executive Director to seek a broader donor base for UNEP. Delegates established a working group on the budget and programme of work, to be chaired by Konrad Paulsen (Chile).

#### IN THE BREEZEWAYS

The first “universal session” of the UNEP GC opened on a very high note, with widespread enthusiasm for the new membership status of the Council and the recent boost given to UNEP as the leading voice of the environment at the global level. Some delegates reflected on how a reformed UNEP marks a coming of age for the programme, and the advancement of the sustainability agenda at large. With the sense of urgency to rapidly advance the environmental pillar of sustainable development, delegates were excited at the prospect of having the institutional tools to make their mark. Others felt the need to reflect on what this meeting means for the post-2015 development agenda.

Stakeholders, who had met over the weekend, were eager to see how governments would react to their proposal of principles for stakeholder participation. The question of how to integrate stakeholders into the reformed UNEP, among other things, will be something they will be keeping a watchful eye on.