MINISTERIAL CONSULTATIONS
MINISTERIAL DIALOGUE: Ministerial consultations on implementing paragraph 88 of the Rio+20 outcome document and UN General Assembly resolution 67/213 continued on Tuesday morning. PAKISTAN said it looked forward to a strengthened UNEP that includes an institutionalized role for the CPR, and a more permanent role for the GMEF. UGANDA sought UNEP’s expertise to sustainably develop its oil industry and, with TANZANIA, highlighted the need to focus on poverty eradication. FRANCE said paragraph 88 of the Rio+20 outcome was a statement on the need to strengthen the role of Africa in the international arena. FIJI noted that the Melanesian states had endorsed the document “Green Growth in the Blue Economy,” which will add value to national policy frameworks. INDONESIA cautioned against immediately establishing a science-policy permanent body at UNEP, saying this could burden UNEP in the short term and result in a duplication of functions with other entities. BOLIVIA expressed concern that the green economy may not consider biodiversity appropriately. CHILDREN AND YOUTH MAJOR GROUP called for civil society participation to be ensured at the national level, and for Major Groups to be represented on the CPR.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS: Session One: Three parallel, morning ministerial roundtable discussions addressed: responsiveness to country needs; science-policy interface; secure, stable, adequate and increased financial resources to fulfill UNEPs’ mandate; stakeholder participation; and future ministerial engagement and institutional arrangements.

On responsiveness to country needs, there were many calls to strengthen UNEP’s regional and sub-regional presence. Others agreed that a more visible UNEP at the regional level would allow the organization to be more responsive. Some ministers suggested integrating UNEP staff into UNDP country offices as a potential way forward. Other ministers suggested involving UNEP in the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) work in order to increase responsiveness to country needs.

There was willingness to strengthen the science-policy interface. Some however, cautioned against duplicating the work of existing science-policy platforms through the creation of new institutions, preferring to consider existing bodies such as IPBES and IPCC. Others noted that lack of synergies between these bodies had created a need for UNEP to bring these assessments together and to identify gaps. Some ministers expressed support for creating a subsidiary body for this purpose. Using UNEP’s Global Environmental Outlook (GEO) as the center for the science-policy interface was also proposed.

On future ministerial engagement, ministers agreed that their active role in the new UNEP would be needed. Many favored renaming UNEP’s Governing Council the “Global Environment Assembly” to reflect its universal nature, and to hold a global conference once every five years of the planet, which they anticipated would ensure greater visibility and political attention.

On civil society engagement, there was strong support to include stakeholders in the work of UNEP. Major Groups called for stakeholder involvement in agenda setting and policy making. A Major Group proposed establishing a working group to consider best practice in institutional arrangements for civil society participation. Ministers gave examples of participatory models adopted by other UN agencies where stakeholders are involved in deliberating draft decisions. One minister said member states are at the core of decision-making, although input from civil society is vital. There were also proposals for a public disclosure policy.

On increased financial resources, there was general agreement on the need to increase UNEP’s donor base, improve transparency, and move away from earmarked funding, with some noting that this would not only make funding more predictable but also strengthen UNEP. Some proposed to equip UNEP with the ability to raise funds on its own. A Major Group proposed investigating how a financial transactions tax could be utilized.

Session Two: Afternoon parallel ministerial roundtable discussions addressed: environmental challenges within sustainable development and UNEP’s contribution to SDGs; and promoting sustainable consumption and production.

On SDGs, many favored convergence with the MDGs, and emphasized the importance of ownership from countries and Major Groups in the process. Delegates discussed tools to enable sustainable development enabling conditions, including the rule of law, respect for human rights, and stable economic policies that create predictability for the business sector.

Sharing national experiences, ministers highlighted efforts on, *inter alia*, green labeling and green procurement, increasing consumer information, instituting sustainable building codes, and reducing waste, including food waste.

On UNEP’s contribution, participants welcomed its role in providing reliable scientific data to inform the SDG process, particularly in developing measurable goals. They cautioned that...
“one size does not fit all”, and that national standards, capacities and levels of development must be taken into account. Several Major Groups delivered statements.

On SCP, some speakers highlighted a need to go beyond the resource efficiency agenda, expressing concerns about mining and farming practices, and noting the responsibility of the public sector and business actors in these areas. Ministers noted that national sustainable development councils that bring together a wide variety of stakeholders have provided a necessary forum to discuss SCP-related issues, with some noting a key challenge was to have similar arrangements at the provincial and local levels.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Sustainable consumption and production: The Secretariat introduced three documents on sustainable consumption and production (SCP) (UNEP/GC.27/S; and UNEP/GC.27/INF/13). The EU and CROATIA pointed to sufficient expertise, knowledge and initiatives for achieving SCP and called for a bottom-up approach in the implementation of the 10-year framework of programme on SCP patterns (10YFP). INDIA said countries should implement the 10YFP incorporating national circumstances, and stressed the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. BRAZIL emphasized the need to build on lessons learnt and on the Marrakech Process to support regional and national initiatives.

INDONESIA stressed that as SCP is a “prerequisite for sustainable development,” and that it should be embedded in the post-2015 development agenda. The US urged delegates not to renegotiate the balanced outcomes agreed on during CSD meetings and in Rio de Janeiro.

JAPAN underscored the importance of environmental awareness targeting consumers and producers and the promotion of the “reduce, reuse, recycle” campaign to reduce waste. BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY MAJOR GROUP called on governments to foster innovation in industry, noting that intra-industry efforts in SCP already exist. FARMERS MAJOR GROUP expressed disappointment with the exclusion of sustainable food and agricultural systems in the proposed programme, and encouraged the GC to, inter alia, include these in the programmes, and enhance synergies between SCP, green economy and chemicals and wastes efforts. Delegates then went through a first reading of the draft decision.

Chemicals and wastes management: The Secretariat introduced the relevant documents (UNEP/GC.27/4, 7 and 8; and UNEP/GC.27/INF/14). CANADA, with the US, expressed support for all three elements of the proposed approach, namely mainstreaming of sound chemicals and waste management into development planning; industry involvement; and dedicated external financing. BRAZIL, INDONESIA, CHINA and ARGENTINA called for a stronger emphasis on dedicated external financing, with BRAZIL supporting a financial mechanism similar to the Montreal Protocol’s Multilateral Fund. SWITZERLAND called for broadening and strengthening the role of the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

On mercury, SWITZERLAND presented a draft decision on the integration of the Minamata Convention into the chemicals and waste cluster (UNEP/GC.27/CRP.1), with provisions for future secretariat support. NORWAY supported Switzerland’s proposal. Many countries underscored that the GC should not pre-empt the outcome of the Diplomatic Conference that will adopt the Minamata Convention.

Introducing the decision on chemicals and waste management (UNEP/GC.27/CRP.2), the US noted that it incorporated and streamlined the proposed decisions on chemicals management. SWITZERLAND, NORWAY, CANADA, NEW ZEALAND, JAPAN and AUSTRALIA supported using this text as a basis for discussion. KENYA, BRAZIL, INDONESIA, ECUADOR, ARGENTINA, SOUTH AFRICA and others opposed, stating that key elements of the original decisions were not reflected in the US draft.

KENYA, with TANZANIA, noted that there had not been much success in dealing with cadmium. A contact group on chemicals and wastes, chaired by Alfi Wills (South Africa), was established.


Renate Christ, Secretary, IPCC, updated delegates on developments within the IPCC.

After a general discussion, delegates began a first reading of a draft decision on international water quality guidelines for ecosystems. Discussions on draft decisions under this agenda item will continue in a contact group.

WORKING GROUP

The working group on institutional arrangements met throughout the day to consider: a new designation for the GC to reflect its universal character; frequency of meetings and the role of ministers; intersessional arrangements; bureaus; and role of stakeholders. On the GC’s name, there was widespread agreement that the term “Council” conveys a limited membership and needs to be changed. Many supported “UN Environment Assembly,” while others said a reference to UNEP is needed. “Environment Assembly” was also proposed. Regarding frequency of meetings, many supported holding annual meetings of the new entity, with ministerial segments held at those sessions every two years. One delegate called for less frequent meetings to increase their impact. Many supported ministerial consultations with stakeholders to set the international environmental agenda. On intersessional work, one delegate proposed expanding the CPR’s authority so that it develops the strategic framework, programme of work and budget interessionally, and creating a technical subsidiary body to examine finance and implementation reports. The need to ensure stakeholder participation in the new universal body was widely recognized, but one delegate cautioned against proposals to enable stakeholders to comment on decisions, submit decisions, or participate in Bureau meetings. The group will reconvene on Wednesday to continue discussion on stakeholder participation.

IN THE BREEZEWAYS

The Executive Director expressed excitement and surprise at the widespread attendance at his “lunch time dialogue on green economy,” where many governments shared their experiences on advancing a national green economy, and thanked UNEP and the other Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE) partners for their support.

Although some had predicted “green economy discussion fatigue” only a few months after the Rio+20 Summit, there was substantial interest in the side event and numerous country experiences were shared. The event also suggested that, regardless of how the concept is defined, many countries are using the green economy as a tool to develop in ways that respect the limits of natural systems, reduce low-carbon emissions, contribute to human well being and poverty reduction, and address pressing issues such as access to clean, and affordable energy. Given the complexity of the challenge, the involvement of UNEP and the other UN agencies involved in PAGE will become increasingly important in the transition to a green, socially-inclusive economy in developing countries.

The concept still has its detractors, however. A developing country delegate drew scattered applause in plenary when he revived a position fought strongly at Rio+20: referring to the Green Economy as an instrument “of commercial nature,” and favored instead the rights of Mother Earth as a more holistic approach to caring for both people and the planet.