



21ST SESSION OF THE UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL AND SECOND GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM 5-9 FEBRUARY 2001

The 21st session of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Governing Council and Second Global Ministerial Environment Forum will begin today at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. Ministers and senior government officials from over 100 countries, as well as representatives of UN agencies, international organizations, academia, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and business and industry, are expected to attend the week-long gathering.

The first part of the meeting will consist of three days of Plenary sessions and a Committee of the Whole (COW). The Plenary will consider a wide range of policy issues, UNEP's contribution to future sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), follow-up to General Assembly resolutions, and linkages among and support to environmental and environment-related conventions. The COW will address programmatic, administrative and budgetary matters, including UNEP's work programme and budget for the biennium 2002-2003.

On the meeting's final two days, a high-level ministerial dialogue will convene to discuss implementation of the Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of UNEP and the Malmö Declaration. Topics likely to be covered during this session include energy policy issues, the specific needs of Africa, and UNEP's contribution to the Ten-year Review of the UN Conference on Environment and Development in 2002 (Rio+10). In other sessions, the ministerial dialogue is expected to address the linkages between environment, health and poverty, and environmental vulnerability to natural and man-made disasters.

The meeting will also include special side events and briefings on new and recent UNEP initiatives and reports on issues ranging from climate change and renewable energy to the loss of the world's indigenous languages and cultures.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL

UNEP was established as a result of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972, which also created an action plan for environmental policy, an Environment Fund, and a declaration of 26 principles on the human environment. Established to provide a forum for the international community to address major and emerging environmental policy issues, the UNEP Governing Council generally meets every two years, with special sessions sometimes convened between meetings. The Governing Council consists of 58 States that serve

four-year terms on the basis of the following equitable geographic distribution: 16 African, 13 Asian, 13 Western European and Others, 10 Latin American and Caribbean, and 6 Eastern European States. The Council reports to the UN General Assembly. Its responsibilities include: promoting international environmental cooperation and recommending policies to achieve this; providing policy guidance for the direction and coordination of environmental programmes in the UN system; reviewing the state of the global environment; 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 this information to governments and NGOs, the Governing Council's achievements have included the initiation of negotiations on many major environmental agreements, including 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 Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade (Rotterdam Convention).

UN CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT: In 1992, the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) reaffirmed UNEP's mandate and supported an enhanced and strengthened role for UNEP and its Governing Council. The Council was called on to continue its role with regard to policy guidance and coordination, taking into account the development perspective. UNCED adopted Agenda 21, the action plan for implementing sustainable development, which lists 14 priority areas on which UNEP should concentrate, including: 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: In 1997, the Governing Council met for its 19th session, the first part of which took place from 27 January - 7 February. 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 advice on UNEP's future. The 19th

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session resumed at UNEP headquarters from 3-4 April 1997, where delegates established the High-Level Committee of Ministers and Officials (HLCOMO) as a subsidiary organ of the Governing Council. The HLCOMO was given the mandate to: consider the international environmental agenda and make reform and policy recommendations to the Council; provide guidance and advice to UNEP's Executive Director; enhance UNEP's collaboration and cooperation with other multilateral bodies, including environmental conventions and their secretariats; and help mobilize adequate and predictable financial resources for UNEP. The HLCOMO consists of 36 members elected by the Council from members of the United Nations and its specialized agencies. Members serve for two years and represent regions as reflected by the current structure of UNEP's Council.

Delegates also adopted the Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of UNEP, which, *inter alia*, revised the UNEP Committee of Permanent Representatives' (CPR) mandate to: review, monitor and assess the implementation of the Governing Council's decisions on administrative, budgetary and programme matters; review UNEP's draft programme of work and budget; review reports requested of the Secretariat by the Council on the effectiveness, efficiency and transparency of the Secretariat's work; and prepare draft decisions for consideration by the Council based on inputs from the Secretariat. The Nairobi Declaration was formally endorsed at the UN General Assembly Special Session for the review of the implementation of Agenda 21 in June 1997.

FIFTH SPECIAL SESSION: The Governing Council held its fifth special session in May 1998. This session adopted decisions on: the evaluation of UNEP's management and administrative support; revitalization, reform and strengthening of UNEP; preparations for CSD-7; freshwater; the Rotterdam Convention; the Global Environment Facility (GEF); and land degradation. The session decided to review the status of UNEP's ongoing reform at the 20th session of the Governing Council 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 HLCOMO.

20TH GOVERNING COUNCIL: The 20th session of the Governing Council took place at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, from 1-5 February 1999, and marked the first meeting of the Council since the adoption of the Nairobi Declaration, the UNGA Special Session to review the implementation of Agenda 21, and the appointment of Klaus Töpfer as UNEP's fourth Executive Director. The meeting demonstrated restored faith in UNEP as the prominent UN agency with responsibility for the environment. The Council took over 30 decisions on a range of topics including: the Environment Fund and administrative and other budgetary matters; linkages among and support to environmental and environment-related conventions; preparations for CSD-7; and policy issues, including the state of the environment, coordination and cooperation within and outside the UN, governance of UNEP and emerging policy issues.

SIXTH SPECIAL SESSION: The first Global Ministerial Environment Forum – in the form of the Sixth Special Session of UNEP's Governing Council – took place in Malmö, Sweden, from 29-31 May 2000. Over 500 delegates from more than 130 countries – including 73 ministers, and representatives of IGOs and NGOs – attended the three-day Forum. The purpose of the Forum was to institute a process for regaining policy coherence in the field of the environment, in direct response to the need for such action emphasized in the 1998 report of the UN Secretary-General on environment and human settlements.

The Forum provided UNEP and its Governing Council with a key opportunity to influence the international environmental agenda of the 21st century. Environment ministers discussed major global environmental challenges in the new century and strategic policy responses to such issues, as well as the roles of the private sector and civil society. Consideration was also given to the need to ensure the effective and efficient functioning of UNEP governance mechanisms, and possible financial implications. Central themes of the Forum were the need to match commitments with action, the role of UNEP in international environmental politics, and concerns about how to make Rio+10 a "real" success.

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

NGO/CIVIL SOCIETY WORKSHOP: A two-day workshop, attended by 80 representatives from youth, women's, indigenous and non-governmental organizations, took place at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, from 1-2 February in preparation for the 21st session of the Governing Council. Participants discussed strategies and policies to enable UNEP to work more closely with NGOs, in particular on the issues of trade and the environment, poverty and the environment, and synergies between the conventions. The Workshop's recommendations are likely to be presented to the afternoon Plenary on Monday, 5 February.

WORKSHOP ON THE GLOBAL COMPACT IN

PRACTICE: This high-level workshop was held from 3-4 February 2001 at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi. The meeting brought together about 50 senior representatives of industry, NGOs, labor, governments, academia and the UN. Its aim was to discuss practical steps for implementing the Global Compact, the initiative launched in 1999 by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan that aims to encourage industry to achieve societal and environmental goals. Participants considered the role of governments, NGOs and civil society in supporting the Global Compact. They also discussed other voluntary initiatives, and considered a case study from the mining sector. In the final session, panelists and participants considered lessons learned and practical suggestions to effectively implement the Global Compact. During these discussions, some NGO participants supported greater NGO involvement, and stressed the importance of transparency, specific goals, a plan of action and monitoring mechanisms. The contribution of the Global Reporting Initiative, which aims to bring transparency and consistency in terms of reporting on companies' environmental and social performance, was also discussed.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

OPENING PLENARY: Plenary will convene at 10:00 am to hear opening statements from several key speakers, including the outgoing Governing Council President, the Kenyan Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, and UNEP's and Habitat's Executive Directors. Participants will also elect officers and adopt the agenda and the organization of work of the session, which is likely to involve holding Plenary meetings concurrently with a Committee of the Whole. Following the opening session, Plenary is expected to resume at 12:00 pm to address the agenda item on policy issues: the state of the environment. It is expected that participants will hear remarks from the Chair of CSD-9, as well as reports from the NGO workshop held from 1-2 February and the Global Compact meeting held from 3-4 February.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE: A Committee of the Whole is expected to convene around 12:00 pm. It will begin by organizing its work, and will then take up programmatic, budgetary and administrative matters.

SIDE EVENTS: A reception for the Global Youth Retreat will be held from 7:00 pm at the Executive Director's Balcony.