



## 22ND SESSION OF THE UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL AND FOURTH GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM: 3-7 FEBRUARY 2003

The 22nd session of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Governing Council and fourth Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF) begins 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 meeting.

The first part of the meeting will consist of two days of Plenary sessions and a Committee of the Whole (COW). The Plenary is expected to consider a wide range of topics, including emerging policy issues, the role of civil society, international environmental governance, linkages among environment-related conventions, and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD).

The COW, which is expected to meet throughout the week, will address coordination and cooperation within and outside the United Nations system, follow-up of post-WSSD UN General Assembly resolutions, UNEP's contribution to future sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), UNEP's Programme of Work, and administrative and budgetary matters.

From Wednesday, 5 February through Friday morning, 7 February, high-level ministerial consultations will take place. The theme of these consultations will be "Implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development." Sessions are expected to focus on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), regional implementation of the WSSD's outcomes, the promotion of sustainable production and consumption patterns, and sustainable development and poverty alleviation, including UNEP's contribution to the biodiversity commitments of the WSSD.

The meeting will also include special side events and exhibitions on new and recent UNEP initiatives and reports on issues ranging from the work of the Post Conflict Unit in Afghanistan, to collaborative partnerships in the water management field. This session of the Governing Council also coincides with the third Global Youth Retreat, a biennial event bringing together about 50 leaders of environmental youth organizations from around the world.

### 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 Council consists of 58 States that serve four-year terms on the basis of the following 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, including the technical aspects of formulating and implementing environmental programmes; 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.

**UN CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT:** In 1992, the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) reaffirmed UNEP's mandate as the lead environment programme within the UN system 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 a 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 in Nairobi. 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. The session resumed at UNEP headquarters from 3-4 April 1997, where delegates established the High-Level Committee of Ministers and Officials as a subsidiary organ of the Governing Council.

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

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**20TH GOVERNING COUNCIL:** The 20th session of the Governing Council took place in Nairobi, from 1-5 February 1999, and marked the first meeting of the Council since UNGASS, the adoption of the Nairobi Declaration, and the appointment of Klaus Töpfer as UNEP's fourth Executive Director. The Council adopted over 30 decisions on a range of topics, including: the Environment Fund, administrative and budgetary matters; linkages among and support to environmental and environment-related conventions; and policy issues, including the state of the environment, coordination and cooperation within and outside the UN, UNEP governance and emerging policy issues.

**SIXTH SPECIAL SESSION:** The first Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF-1) – in the form of the sixth Special Session of UNEP's Governing Council (GCSS-6) – took place in Malmö, Sweden, from 29-31 May 2000. The purpose of the GMEF was to institute a process for ensuring policy coherence in the field of the environment, as proposed in the 1998 report of the UN Secretary-General on environment and human settlements. In this regard, it concluded that UNEP's role was to be strengthened and its financial base broadened. Environment ministers adopted the Malmö Ministerial Declaration, which agreed that the WSSD should review the requirements for a greatly strengthened institutional structure for international environmental governance (IEG).

**21ST SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL AND GMEF-2:** The 21st session of the Governing Council and second Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF-2) took place from 5-9 February 2001, in Nairobi. On the meeting's final two days, a high-level ministerial dialogue discussed implementation of the Nairobi Declaration and the Malmö Ministerial Declaration. The Council adopted over 30 decisions relating to various issues, including: chemicals management; trade and environment; support to Africa; the environmental situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories; implementation of the Malmö Ministerial Declaration; the role of civil society; governance of UNEP; IEG; compliance with and enforcement of MEAs; and the Environment Fund budgets.

**INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE PROCESS:** The 21st session of the Council established the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Group of Ministers or Their Representatives (IGM) to undertake a comprehensive policy-oriented assessment of existing institutional weaknesses as well as future needs and options for strengthening IEG, including the financing of UNEP.

The IGM met five times, with the aim of concluding its business and adopting its report during the Governing Council's seventh Special Session (GCSS-7) and the third Global Ministerial Environment Forum, which was held in Cartagena, Colombia, from 13-15 February 2002.

**SEVENTH SPECIAL SESSION:** At GCSS-7, delegates reviewed implementation of decisions taken during the Governing Council's 21st session. They also considered UNEP's activities taken in relation to Agenda 21, particularly with reference to its preparations for the WSSD, including IEG.

The IGM had failed to reach agreement on a number of critical issues, in particular on strategies to ensure predictable and stable funding for UNEP and according universal membership to the GMEF. However, these issues were resolved during GCSS-7, at which delegates adopted the IGM report on IEG and agreed to transmit it to the third Preparatory Committee session of the WSSD.

Delegates attending GCSS-7 also adopted decisions related to: a strategic approach to chemicals management at the global level; compliance with and enforcement of MEAs; development of a strategy for the active engagement of civil society, the private sector and major groups in the work of UNEP; implementation of

the Global Programme of Action (GPA) for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities; and the environmental situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

### INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

**WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:** The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) met from 26 August – 4 September 2002, in Johannesburg, South Africa. As stipulated in UN General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 55/199, the WSSD's goal was to hold a high-level ten-year review of UNCED to reinvigorate the global commitment to sustainable development. The WSSD gathered 21,340 participants from governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, the private sector, civil society, academia and the scientific community.

The WSSD negotiated and adopted two main documents: the Johannesburg Declaration and the Plan of Implementation. The Johannesburg Declaration outlines the path taken from UNCED to the WSSD, highlights present challenges, expresses a commitment to sustainable development, underscores the importance of multilateralism and emphasizes the need for implementation. The Plan of Implementation is designed as a framework for action to implement the commitments originally agreed at UNCED and includes chapters on poverty eradication, consumption and production, the natural resource base, globalization, health, small island developing States (SIDS), Africa, other regional initiatives, means of implementation, and the institutional framework for sustainable development. Both documents are widely relevant to UNEP's mandate and ongoing work.

**OTHER MEETINGS:** A number of other relevant meetings have taken place prior to this week's Governing Council session. The *Ad Hoc* Meeting of Judges for the Development of a Plan of Work as a Follow-up to the recent Global Judges Symposium on Sustainable Development and the Role of Law took place in Nairobi from 30-31 January 2003. Participants worked on developing a detailed plan for capacity building of judiciaries and other legal stakeholders. An oral report of outcomes from both meetings will be presented to UNEP's Governing Council this week.

The fourth Global Civil Society Forum took place from 1-2 February 2003 in Nairobi. The meeting consisted of a regional segment focusing on the Environment Initiative of NEPAD, and a global segment on the role of civil society in implementing the outcomes of the WSSD. Recommendations will be presented to UNEP's Governing Council this week.

Delegates also met in regional groups on 2 February to discuss their input and positions for this week's Governing Council session.

### THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

**OPENING PLENARY:** Plenary will convene in Conference Room 2 at 10:00 am to hear opening statements from several key speakers, elect officers, and adopt the agenda and the organization of work of the session. Delegates are then expected to take up the agenda item on emerging policy issues, with implementation of outcomes from the WSSD likely to prove the main area of discussion. For the afternoon session, the Plenary meeting will move to Conference Room 1.

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE:** A Committee of the Whole (COW) is expected to convene at 3:00 pm in Conference Room 2. It will begin by organizing its work, and will then take up various policy-related issues, including the state of the environment and IEG. It is also expected to consider programmatic, budgetary and administrative matters.

**SIDE EVENTS:** A reception hosted by UNEP's Executive Director and the Governing Council President is scheduled for 6:30-8:00 pm at a venue to be announced.