UNEPE GOVERNING COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS TUESDAY, 4 FEBRUARY 2003

Delegates met in Plenary throughout the day, discussing policy issues, outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), and linkages among environment-related conventions, with a particular focus on chemicals, trade and water issues. The Committee of the Whole (COW) also met in morning and afternoon sessions to consider programmatic, administrative and budgetary matters, the state of the environment, emerging policy issues, and the role of civil society. A drafting committee convened to begin deliberations on various draft decisions, and contact groups met on the budget and chemicals.

PLENARY:

WSSD OUTCOMES, POLICY ISSUES, AND LINKAGES: Governing Council President Ruhakana Rugunda indicated that the agenda items on WSSD outcomes, policy issues, and linkages among MEAs would be taken-up together. He asked delegates to focus first on chemicals-related outcomes from the WSSD and on trade and environment issues raised by the Doha Ministerial Declaration.

Chemicals and Trade Issues: Jim Willis, Director of UNEP’s Chemicals Programme, reported on its work (UNEP/GC.22/10/Add.1) and highlighted the focus on issues emphasized at the WSSD. Drawing attention to the chemicals-related draft decisions before the Governing Council (UNEP/GC.22/L.1), he noted that some delegations – including the EU, Norway, Switzerland, and US – had submitted alternative texts.

Hussein Abaza, Chief of UNEP’s Trade Programme, reflected on UNEP’s work in this area and on key issues emerging from the WSSD and the fourth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, held at Doha in November 2001 (UNEP/GC.22/10/Add.2/Rev.1).

Many delegates congratulated UNEP’s Chemicals Programme on its efficiency and the high standard of its work. SWITZERLAND, NEW ZEALAND, and CANADA supported giving the Programme a higher funding priority.

On the global mercury assessment, the EU and NORWAY supported a legally-binding instrument, while CANADA, SWITZERLAND, and NEW ZEALAND encouraged strengthening implementation of the Global Environment Monitoring System’s water programme.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

WORK PROGRAMME AND ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS: Deputy Executive Director Shafqat Kakakhel presented the major elements of the proposed UNEP budget for 2004-2005 (UNEP/GC.22/6, UNEP/GC.22/6/Add.1 & UNEP/GC.22/7), noting a net increase of US$41.6 million from the 2002-2003 budget. He outlined UNEP’s proposed Programme of Work, highlighting seven key areas: assessment and early warning; environmental policy development and law; environmental policy implementation; technology, industry and economics; regional cooperation and representation; environmental conventions; and communications and public information (UNEP/GC.22/6).

In the ensuing discussions, Kakakhel agreed with delegates’ comments on the need to focus on regional implementation. Replying to statements about the priority given by UNEP to its climate change work, he emphasized that the budgetary allocations from UNEP’s activities and agreed on the importance of managing its resources efficiently, noting the mechanisms in place to ensure efficiency.

POLICY ISSUES: State of the Environment: Kakakhel outlined policy issues relating to supporting Africa, stating that WSSD decisions on regional implementation and the emergence of initiatives such as NEPAD have laid the foundation for UNEP to take greater steps in this area. He then reviewed policy issues concerning the global assessment of the state of the marine environment (UNEP/GC.22/2/Add.5).

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launched UNEP’s process of marine assessment, he explained that the current draft decision outlines UNEP’s follow-up activities. He also reviewed the draft decision on post-conflict environmental assessments (UNEP/GC/22/2/Add.7).

In the ensuring discussion, SYRIA expressed concerns regarding the environmental situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. INDIA, PAKISTAN and INDONESIA questioned the appropriateness of discussions on the Asian Brown Cloud issue, and the US argued against UNEP playing a role in climate change and coral reef initiatives.

**Emerging Policy Issues:** Kakakhel then introduced draft decisions relating to: the implementation of the outcome of the Global Judges Symposium to promote capacity building among judiciaries; the application of Rio Principle 10 on access to information and legal redress; the legal dimension of sustainable patterns of production and consumption and environmentally and socially responsible behavior; and the status of environment-related conventions and protocols (UNEP/GC/22/3/Add.2).

**Role of Civil Society:** Kakakhel reviewed draft decisions regarding the engagement and involvement of youth in environmental issues (UNEP/GC/22/3/Add.1) and UNEP’s strategy for sport and the environment (UNEP/GC/22/3/Add.3). He also presented UNEP’s policy responses on: enhancing civil society engagement in the work of UNEP; strengthening the engagement of business and industry; and UNEP’s participation in the work of the GEF. The US, supported by others, urged that no action be taken on civil society’s role until the UN Secretary-General’s report is completed, and argued that guidelines on civil society participation be based on those used by ECOSOC. Several delegations acknowledged the role of the private sector and the need for partnerships to achieve sustainable development.

Kakakhel also reviewed documentation on UNEP’s cooperation with UN-HABITAT and a draft decision on environmental emergency prevention, preparedness, assessment, response and mitigation (UNEP/GC/22/3).

**DRAFTING COMMITTEE**

On Tuesday morning, Chair Juergen Weerth opened the Drafting Committee’s first session, and introduced draft decisions submitted by the CPR (UNEP/GC.22/L.1). The Committee approved decisions addressing the restructured GEF and the revision of financial rules of the Environment Fund, while a draft decision on the Environment Fund budgets was deferred.

According to observers, some delegates “began playing hardball” on Tuesday. As substantive negotiations started in the Drafting Committee, participants noticed strong positions emerging as delegates reopened debates on several draft decisions previously approved by the Committee of Permanent Representatives. While at least one diplomat felt the Council may have “bitten off more than it can chew” with its heavy agenda, others were not so sure, noting that at least positions were now becoming clear on potentially thorny issues such as the environment and cultural diversity, and the indicative scale of contributions. Several added that the tough positions taken by negotiators on Tuesday were probably due to an unwillingness to give too much away prior to the arrival of their ministers on Wednesday. They predicted that the situation could well become more settled and “consensus-friendly” as the week progresses.

**THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY**

**MINISTERIAL CONSULTATIONS:** The high-level ministerial segment of the meeting begins at 9:00 am in Conference Room 2. The segment will consist of consultations on the implementation of the WSSD’s outcomes. In the morning, discussions will focus on sustainable production and consumption, while in the afternoon talks are expected to turn to environment-poverty linkages and UNEP’s contribution to the WSSD’s biodiversity-related commitments.

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE:** The COW will convene at 3:00 pm in Conference Room 2. It is expected to resume its consideration of policy issues and the role of civil society.

**DRAFTING COMMITTEE:** The drafting group is expected to convene at 10:00 am in Room R310 to continue its work on the remaining draft decisions.

**CONTACT GROUP ON THE BUDGET:** The contact group will reconvene at 11:00 am in Conference Room 7 to begin negotiating the draft decision on the Environment Fund budgets, the proposed biennial programme, and the support budget for 2004-2005. Extensive discussions are expected on the programme’s thematic focus and the subprogramme narratives.

**CONTACT GROUP ON CHEMICALS:** Delegates will convene at 10:00 am in Room C224, and are expected to consider the global mercury assessment, plans for immediate action at the national level, directions to UNEP on how to proceed, and international initiatives.

**BUDGET CONTACT GROUP**

Contact Group Chair John Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda) invited questions on the Executive Director’s report on the Environment Fund budgets and the proposed biennial programme and support budget for 2004-2005 (UNEP/GC.22/6). Replying to several developed countries, a UNON representative clarified issues pertaining to: the expected income of UNEP in 2004-2005; the authority of the Executive Director to reallocate resources between programmes; the financial reserve; and the carry-over of resources.

On the thematic focus of UNEP’s Programme of Work, a developed country proposed numerous deletions relating to UNEP’s role in promoting MEA ratification, trade and environment, access and benefit sharing regimes in relation to biodiversity, and the policy integration of the WEHAB agenda, arguing that the proposals were outside UNEP’s mandate.

**CHEMICALS CONTACT GROUP**

In the Chemicals Contact Group, chaired by Halldor Thorgersson (Iceland), developed countries emphasized the need for openness and transparency in the strategic approach to international chemicals management, suggesting that key recommendations be drawn from GCSS-7/GMEF-3 and the WSSD outcomes, the Bahia Declaration, and the Steering Committee on the Strategic Approach. Delegates stressed the need for clarity and avoiding duplication of other work in formulating a mercury programme.

**IN THE CORRIDORS**

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