THIRD SESSION OF THE HIGH-LEVEL OPEN-ENDED INTERGOVERNMENTAL WORKING GROUP ON AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL STRATEGIC PLAN FOR TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING: 2-4 DECEMBER 2004

The third session of the UN Environment Programme’s High-level Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on an Intergovernmental Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building opens today at the Intercontinental Resort in Bali, Indonesia. The aim of the session is to resume negotiations on the draft Intergovernmental Strategic Plan based on the UNEP Executive Director’s compilation of proposals (UNEP/IGSP/3/2), with the aim of producing a final Intergovernmental Strategic Plan for consideration at the 23rd session of the UNEP Governing Council/GLOBAL Ministerial Environment Forum in February 2005. The formal session of the Intergovernmental Working Group was preceded by a day of regional group meetings, as well as informal consultations among government delegations.

INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS

Arcadio Ngazawia (Tanzania), Chair of the Intergovernmental Working Group, opened an informal plenary session on Wednesday afternoon, 1 December. He informed delegates that the Executive Director’s compilation paper would be used as the basis of discussion in Bali. He highlighted the outcomes of the informal consultation in Dar es Salaam in October 2004, including a new paper (UNEP/IEG/IGSP/3/3), containing proposals on how to address the contentious elements of the IGSP, such as issues related to needs and objectives, implementation, governance, regional dimensions, and financing. He then called upon delegates to focus on issues of implementation of the plan, regional action plans and funding.

In response to the Chair’s suggestion to convene informal working group sessions immediately after the informal plenary, the Netherlands for the EU, supported by Pakistan for the G-77/CHINA and the US, requested more time for informal consultations among regional groups. The US cautioned against starting informal negotiations immediately and said they preferred to have informal discussions among governments instead. The plenary agreed to have regional group meetings followed by informal sessions of the two working groups.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL STRATEGIC PLAN

In recent years, technology support and capacity building have become a key part of the quest for sustainable development. Issues encompassing human, scientific, technological, organizational, institutional and resource capabilities are core components of the mandate and work of UNEP and feature prominently in both Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. Capacity building, in particular, has become an explicit priority for the UN system.

SIXTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL/GMEF: The sixth Special Session of UNEP’s Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GCSS-6/GMEF) took place from 29-31 May 2000, in Malmö, Sweden. Ministers adopted the Malmö Ministerial Declaration, which called on the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development to review the requirements for a greatly strengthened institutional structure for international environmental governance (IEG).

INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE REVIEW: Issues regarding IEG were subsequently taken up at the 21st session of the UNEP Governing Council/GMEF, which met from 5-9 February 2001, in Nairobi, Kenya. The Council established an Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Ministers or Their Representatives (IGM) to undertake a comprehensive policy-oriented assessment of existing institutional weaknesses, as well as of future needs and options for strengthening IEG. The Group of Ministers met five times, and reported to the seventh Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council/GMEF in 2002.

SEVENTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL/GMEF: The report on IEG was presented during the seventh Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council/GMEF, which was held from 13-15 February 2002, in Cartagena, Colombia. The GC/GMEF adopted decision SS/VII/1 on IEG, with the IGM report as an annex. In the report, the IGM underscored the need for UNEP to play a more prominent role in supporting country-level capacity building and training, and national-level coordination of the environmental component of sustainable development. The IGM also recommended that UNEP help strengthen regional environmental governance and improve coordination, implementation, capacity building and technology transfer in support of regional initiatives. The IGM also recognized the need to strengthen the ability of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to participate fully in the development of international environmental policy, including support for countries to undertake the requisite implementation of international environmental agreements at the national level. In terms of technology support, the IGM highlighted the need to establish and facilitate arrangements for the transfer of environmentallysound technologies to developing countries. The IGM noted that UNEP, in cooperation with relevant regional and subregional organizations, could help strengthen regional environmental governance.

The Group of Ministers also recommended that an Intergovernmental Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building be developed to improve the effectiveness of capacity building, and to address the gaps identified by
assessments of existing activities and needs. The IGM also decided that the plan should be built on two components: capacity building and training, and the national-level coordination of the environmental component of sustainable development.

Regarding capacity building and training, the IGM recommended strengthening national institutions responsible for the environment and the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements. On national-level coordination of the environmental component of sustainable development, the IGM underscored the need for developing countries to have access to financial, technological and technical resources from the international community.

WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: The World Summit on Sustainable Development convened from 26 August to 4 September 2002, in Johannesburg, South Africa. The Summit adopted two main documents: the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI). Both documents address issues of technology support and capacity building. Paragraph 137 of the JPOI states that UNEP and other UN agencies should strengthen their contribution to sustainable development programmes and the implementation of Agenda 21 at all levels, particularly in the area of promoting capacity building.

22ND SESSION OF THE UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL/GMEF: The 22nd session of the UNEP Governing Council/GMEF took place from 3-7 February 2003, in Nairobi, Kenya. The GC/GMEF adopted decision GC.22/17/I, which requests UNEP’s Executive Director to prepare a draft Intergovernmental Strategic Plan for Technical Support and Capacity Building (IGSP) to be presented to the eighth Special Session of the Governing Council/GMEF.

SIXTH MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT GROUP: The sixth meeting of the Environment Management Group (EMG) was held on 6 February, 2004, in Geneva, Switzerland. The meeting focused on the environmental aspects of capacity building in order to identify the possible contribution and added value of the EMG to the ongoing efforts of the UN. The EMG decided to establish an Issue Management Group on capacity building, with the mandate to develop a situation/needs analysis in the area of the environmental capacities of capacity building in the two pilot areas of biodiversity and chemicals.

EIGHTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL/GMEF: The eighth Special Session of UNEP’s Governing Council/GMEF took place from 2-4 September 2004, in Nairobi, Kenya. Delegates considered the Chair’s “building blocks” paper. The first part of the Chair’s paper contained a general introduction outlining relevant international decisions that spell out UNEP’s mandate for capacity building and capacity building. The second part of the paper contained the framework of the strategic plan and included sections and subsections addressing the following issues: needs and gaps; objectives and functions; guiding principles and strategic considerations; contents of the plan, outlining activities at the global, regional, and national levels as well as priority areas, the JPOI, south-south cooperation, and information for decision-making: the role of science, monitoring and assessment; and financial mechanism. The session explored the possible contents of the draft IGSP and engaged in initial drafting of the text.

SECOND SESSION OF THE IGSP: The second session of the IGSP took place from 2-4 September 2004, in Nairobi, Kenya. Delegates considered the Chair’s “building blocks” paper. The first part of the Chair’s paper contained a general introduction outlining relevant international decisions that spell out UNEP’s mandate for capacity building and capacity building. The second part of the paper contained the framework of the strategic plan and included sections and subsections addressing the following issues: needs and gaps; objectives and functions; guiding principles and strategic considerations; contents of the plan, outlining activities at the global, regional, and national levels as well as priority areas, the JPOI, south-south cooperation, and information for decision-making: the role of science, monitoring and assessment; and financial mechanism. The session explored the possible contents of the draft IGSP and engaged in initial drafting of the text.

INTERSESSIONAL MEETINGS
INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS: UNEP GC President Ngazwaa hosted an informal consultation in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in October 2004. At the meeting he presented a non-paper, entitled “Reflections on the outcome of the New York and Nairobi rounds and the Bali challenges.” The paper emphasized consensus achieved in Nairobi on the role of UNEP in assessing needs and delivering capacity building and technology support, and suggested some issues for further consideration. It also offered compromise language, building on the previous discussion in the Intergovernmental Working Group.