



GC-23/GMEF HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 21 FEBRUARY 2005

Delegates to GC-23/GMEF met in a morning plenary to hear welcoming and opening statements. In the afternoon, ministerial consultations addressed the internationally agreed development goals included in the Millennium Declaration, with a focus on environment and poverty. The Committee of the Whole (COW) heard regional statements, and the introduction of agenda items on chemicals management, UNEP's water policy and strategy, and programme and budgetary matters, and conducted a general debate on programme and budgetary matters.

OPENING PLENARY

Klaus Töpfer, UNEP Executive Director, opened GC-23/GMEF, which observed a minute of silence for the victims of the recent Asian Tsunami.

Outgoing Governing Council President Arcado Ntagazwa (Tanzania) said the adoption of the Bali Strategic Plan was a crucial achievement that will change the way UNEP conducts its business. He said the Plan's success will depend on how it is financed, and suggested that the Plans' broad scope allows for contributions from the Environment Fund or from trust funds and counterpart contributions.

Shafqat Kakakhel, UNEP Deputy Executive Director, delivered a message from Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General. He called on national governments to work with the private sector and civil society to sustain the momentum for sustainable development, and to protect natural resources that are fundamental in combating poverty.

Anna Tibaijuka, Executive Director of UN-HABITAT, stressed the need for cooperation among various international organizations and a concrete policy commitment by governments in meeting the poverty and environment challenges, especially the provision of safe drinking water and housing to people living in slums.

Zeng Peiyan, Vice-Premier of China, outlined China's commitment to environmental protection. He called for international cooperation in new areas for implementing the MDGs, such as building environmental infrastructure, reducing natural disasters, opening markets and removing trade barriers.

Mwai Kibaki, President of Kenya, emphasized the opportunity to utilize UNEP's work programme to eradicate extreme poverty and ensure sustainability. He further urged the strengthening of UNEP's financial base, increasing States' contributions to the Environment Fund, and consolidating UNEP's scientific base.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: Delegates elected Rachmat Witoelar, Indonesia's Minister of Environment as GC President by acclamation. The also elected Laurent Sedogo (Burkina Faso), Sulfina Barbu (Romania), Beat Nobs (Switzerland) as Vice-Presidents, and Donald Cooper (Bahamas) as Rapporteur. Delegates adopted the provisional agenda and

organization of work (UNEP/GC/23/1 and Add.1) President Witoelar said an open-ended drafting group would be established to consider draft decisions during the week.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S POLICY STATEMENT:

In his policy statement, Klaus Töpfer stressed the importance of GC-23/GMEF contributing to the work of the Beijing +10 review, the Commission for Sustainable Development, and the General Assembly High Level Plenary. He recommended as an outcome of the GC/GMEF Ministerial Dialogues a "Nairobi Communiqué," which he said should focus on the rule of law and its role in meeting the MDGs. He also urged a focus on: the ecosystem approach to Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM); technology transfer; capacity building; sustainable consumption and production; chemicals, including mercury; the Bali Strategic Plan; strengthening UNEP's scientific base; and early warning-systems.

MINISTERIAL CONSULTATIONS

The Ministerial Consultations were moderated by Elizabeth Thompson, Barbados' Minister of Physical Development and the Environment, and Miklós Persányi, Hungary's Minister of Environment.

In a key-note address, Jeffrey Sachs, UN Millennium Project, underscored the links between poverty and environment, and outlined the recommendations of the Millennium Project report. He highlighted the need for rich countries to fulfill their commitments to provide 0.7% of GNP for development assistance to meet the 2015 goals. Noting the lack of an environment focus in the majority of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), he underscored the need for a local UNEP presence and increased local environmental expertise in poor countries.

Many delegations emphasized the linkages between the MDGs on poverty eradication and environmental sustainability. NORWAY called for a global partnership to meet the MDGs, and the Netherlands, for the EU, stressed the linkage between the Millennium Declaration and the WSSD. An NGO representative emphasized the importance of the link between environment and poverty reduction, and supported the ecosystem approach.

Several developing country delegations stressed that the MDGs could not be achieved without adequate funding and urged developed countries to meet their ODA commitments. The US said ODA should not be the only focus of development financing. Many delegations urged measures to address debt relief. TANZANIA called for the scrapping of illegitimate debts, and LESOTHO stressed the need to reduce the debts of African countries. FINLAND and the CZECH REPUBLIC called on UNEP to produce clear scientific information on the economic costs of environmental degradation. MALAWI called for reforming the global trade architecture, as well as removing agricultural subsidies and tariffs on processed commodities. NORWAY urged donor countries to meet their commitments to provide 0.7% ODA, and the UK outlined the importance of the



International Financing Facility in providing resources to meet the MDGs. FRANCE said there should be more mechanisms for funding environment-related projects, and GERMANY highlighted the need for innovative financing mechanisms.

SUDAN emphasized the importance of environmental post-conflict assessments, and BRAZIL highlighted the need to address violence related to land disputes. KYRGYZSTAN underscored the link made in the report of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change between environment and security, as well as its emphasis on collective security.

CONGO underscored the need for the transfer of know-how, and URUGUAY and CAPE VERDE highlighted the importance of education. SWEDEN suggested that young people in developing countries be employed to restore the environment.

FINLAND called for the development of a common UN roadmap to ensure the integration of environment and poverty into development planning. The UK supported enhancing the participation of the poor in development plans. NORWAY stressed the mainstreaming of environment and gender into the UN system, and said that CSD-13 should have a stronger focus on sanitation and gender.

The UK called for a stronger, properly funded UNEP which is able to ensure a better integration of environmental sustainability in the UN system. REPUBLIC OF KOREA stressed the need to strengthen UNEP's capacity-building activities. SWEDEN recommended a legal framework for chemicals, especially for mercury.

MEXICO pointed out the linkage between disasters and environmental management.

In response to questions posed by delegates, Sachs emphasized the importance of information flows and the need to incorporate environment analysis and accounting into all PRSPs, and the need for detailed and systematic reporting of the implementation of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Opening the session, COW Chair Beat Nobs offered suggestions on the organization of work, which were approved by the Committee. A drafting committee under the chairmanship of Paul Zom Lolo (Nigeria) will commence work on Tuesday afternoon. Two open-ended working groups were established, which will focus on the programme and budget, chaired by Frederic Renard (Belgium), and on chemicals management, chaired by Viveka Bohn (Sweden).

Cuba, for the G-77/CHINA, reiterated its call for global cooperation in addressing poverty, in particular for the provision of financial resources and technology transfer. He expressed concern over decreasing ODA and increasing conditionalities for the provision of financial resources, and stressed the importance of increased market access, and a durable solution to the debt problems of developing countries. He emphasized the need for the effective and immediate implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan, including the provision of necessary financial resources, as well as strengthening UNEP's financial base and scientific expertise. He said the Group supports the adoption of a decision on the strengthening of environmental emergency responses and the development of early warning systems. He urged completing the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) process before addressing new substantive issues and negotiations in the chemicals field.

The EU urged GC-23/GMEF to take into consideration the report of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel, and of the Millennium Project on the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals in the Millennium Declaration, and to contribute to the Millennium Review Summit. He reaffirmed the EU's commitment to strengthening IEG and the scientific base of UNEP, and stressed that the realization of the Bali Strategic Plan is essential for the balance of all IEG elements. He also supported the SAICM process and a legally binding instrument on mercury. He advocated IWRM at the basin level, commended UNEP's role in responding to the recent tsunami disaster, and urged its involvement in the rehabilitation phase. Guy Canivet, President of France's Court

of Appeals, presented the outcome of the roundtable dialogue on advancing the MDGs through the rule of law, held in Nairobi on 16-17 February 2005 (UNEP/GC.23/CRP.2). He stressed the need for, among others: an independent judiciary; free and non-discriminatory access to law and information by indigenous peoples, minorities and women; and access to soil and water for eradicating poverty and discrimination. He further urged UNEP, within the context of the Montevideo Programme III, to focus on the rights of women, and to develop and enhance transnational networks of judges.

Shafqat Kakakhel, UNEP, presented on the Environment Fund Budget: Proposed Biennial Programme and Support Budget for 2006-2007 (UNEP/GC.23/8 and 23/8.Add.1), prepared in collaboration with the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR). Outlining the subprogrammes of the Programme of Work for 2006-2007, he said each subprogramme addresses capacity-building needs identified by governments, and represents a contribution to the implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan.

Halifah Drammeh, UNEP, introduced the UNEP water policy and strategy, as well as other water-related issues (UNEP/GC.23/3/Add.5). He said the document presents the updated version of UNEP's key policy issues relating to environmental aspects of water activities.

John Buccini, UNEP, presented on chemicals management (UNEP/GC.23/3/Add.1), and the chemicals-related draft decisions prepared by the CPR (UNEP/GC.23/L.1). Noting the progress achieved in the SAICM process, UNEP's mercury programme, and the Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, he said a single decision on chemicals management, instead of various decisions on different items, is being considered. On mercury, he said the current proposed decision reflects alternative paths to move forward, and he predicted substantial discussions on this item in the chemicals contact group.

Kakakhel introduced a document containing the 10 draft decisions prepared by the CPR, and noted that these draft decisions will be dealt with by the drafting group and working groups (UNEP/GC.23/L.1).

On the Programme of Work, the Environment Fund and administrative and other budgetary matters, the G-77/CHINA and others supported the proposed Programme of Work and budget, stressing the need for immediate and effective implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan. EGYPT called for the allocation of funds in the budget for the Bali Strategic Plan. The EU sought clarification on differences between activities under the Bali Strategic Plan and those covered by the 2006-2007 biennium Programme of Work. Supported by SWITZERLAND, she underlined the crucial role of the voluntary indicative scale of contributions in strengthening the Environment Fund, and called for a balance between earmarked and non-earmarked funds. NIGERIA and KENYA called for continuous financial support for water activities in Africa. A representative of the GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM called on UNEP to work with civil society in implementing its Programme of Work, noting ways of improving civil society's participation in preparing future programmes and budgets. FRIENDS OF THE EARTH INTERNATIONAL suggested integration of gender and forest issues into the proposed Programme of Work. She also stated that WTO and MEAs rules should be mutually supportive.

IN THE CORRIDORS

The Governing Council commenced its work on an up-beat note as delegates listened to statements promising an exciting substantive session. The afternoon of the first day saw a spate of contact and working groups formally established. Some delegates were heard commending the COW Chair's tactics, who clearly wished to draw forth as many country positions as possible before the real negotiations began, and to dispose of the less contentious issues, like the Indian Ocean tsunami, before proceeding to address difficult text. Despite the delegates' valiant struggle with several kilos of serious documentation on all conceivable aspects of the agenda, certain eagerness was felt in the air as to editing possibilities on the heavily bracketed portions of the draft decisions.