

TWELFTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL/GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM: 20-22 FEBRUARY 2012

The 12th Special Session of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GCSS-12/GMEF) opens today at the United Nations Office in Nairobi, Kenya, and continues until 22 February 2012. The ministerial consultations during the 12th Special Session will focus on emerging policy issues under the overall theme of “The environmental agenda in the changing world: from Stockholm (1972) to Rio (2012)”. This year marks the 40th anniversary of the establishment of UNEP, and the Symposium “Environmental change and global responses in 2012” will be organized as part of the commemoration activities. The Committee of the Whole is expected to take up consideration of emerging policy issues on environment and development. Various side events, as well as the 13th Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum (GMGSF-13) are also taking place.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNEP GC/GMEF

As a result of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, the UN General Assembly, in its resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 1972, established UNEP as the central UN node for global environmental cooperation and treaty making. The resolution also established the UNEP GC to provide a forum for the international community to address major and emerging environmental policy issues. The GC’s responsibilities include the promotion of international environmental cooperation and the recommendation of policies to achieve it, and the provision of policy guidance for the direction and coordination of environmental programmes in the UN system. The GC reports to the UN General Assembly, which also elects the GC’s 58 members for four-year terms, taking into account the principle of equitable regional representation. The GMEF is constituted by the GC as envisaged in GA resolution 53/242. The purpose of the GMEF is to institute, at a high political level, a process for reviewing important and emerging policy issues in the field of the environment.

GCSS-6/GMEF: The sixth Special Session of the GC/GMEF (GCSS-6/GMEF) took place from 29-31 May 2000, in Malmö, Sweden. Ministers adopted the Malmö Ministerial Declaration, which agreed that the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) should review the requirements for a greatly strengthened institutional structure for international environmental governance (IEG).

GC-21/GMEF: This meeting took place from 5-9 February 2001, in Nairobi, Kenya. Delegates 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. They also adopted decision 21/7, which requests the UNEP Executive Director to examine the need for a strategic approach to international chemicals management (SAICM).

GCSS-7/GMEF: This meeting was held from 13-15 February 2002, in Cartagena, Colombia. In its decision SS.VII/1, the GC/GMEF adopted the IGM report, which contains recommendations aimed at strengthening IEG, including through: improved coherence in international environmental policy-making; strengthening the role and financial situation of UNEP; improved coordination among, and effectiveness of, multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs); and capacity building, technology transfer and country-level coordination. Delegates also adopted decisions related to, *inter alia*, SAICM at the global level.

WSSD: The WSSD was held from 26 August-4 September 2002, in Johannesburg, South Africa. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) sets out a framework for action to implement the commitments originally agreed at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. The JPOI, among other things, emphasized that the international community should fully implement the outcomes of decision SS.VII/1 on IEG.

GC-22/GMEF: This meeting took place from 3-7 February 2003, in Nairobi, Kenya. Delegates adopted more than 40 decisions on issues relating to IEG, post-conflict environmental assessment, UNEP’s water policy and strategy, SAICM, a mercury programme, support to Africa, production and consumption patterns, and the environment and cultural diversity.

GCSS-8/GMEF: This meeting took place from 29-31 March 2004, in Jeju, Republic of Korea. At the conclusion of the ministerial consultations, delegates adopted the “Jeju Initiative,” containing the Chair’s summary of the discussions and decisions on: small island developing states; waste management; and water resource management; regional annexes; and the implementation of decision SS.VII/1 on IEG.

GC-23/GMEF: This meeting took place from 21-25 February 2005, in Nairobi, Kenya. Ministers adopted decisions on, among other things: the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building; IEG; chemicals management; UNEP’s water policy and strategy; gender equality and the environment; poverty and the environment; and strengthening environmental emergency response and developing disaster prevention, preparedness, mitigation and early warning systems.



GCSS-9/GMEF: This meeting was held from 7-9 February 2006, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Ministerial consultations addressed, *inter alia*, policy issues relating to energy and the environment, chemicals management, and tourism and the environment. The plenary discussions on environmental governance and GC universal membership did not produce an agreed outcome, and delegates decided that the report of the meeting should reflect the divergence of views expressed.

GC-24/GMEF: This meeting convened from 5-9 February 2007, in Nairobi, Kenya. Delegates adopted 15 decisions on issues relating to, *inter alia*: chemicals, including a provision to establish the *Ad Hoc* Open-ended Working Group to Review and Assess Measures to Address the Global Issue of Mercury; the world environment situation; IEG; South-South cooperation; waste management; 2010-2020 UN Decade for Deserts and the Fight Against Desertification; UNEP's updated water policy and strategy; and support to Africa in environmental management and protection.

GCSS-10/GMEF: Convening in Monaco from 20-22 February 2008, Ministerial consultations addressed the emerging policy issues of mobilizing finance to meet the climate challenge, and IEG and UN reform. The GC/GMEF adopted five decisions on: the UNEP Medium-term Strategy 2010-2013; chemicals management, including mercury and waste management; the Global Environment Outlook; sustainable development of the Arctic region; and the International Decade for Combating Climate Change.

GC-25/GMEF: GC-25/GMEF convened from 16-20 February 2009 in Nairobi, Kenya. The GC/GMEF adopted 17 decisions on issues relating to, *inter alia*: chemicals management, including mercury; the world environment situation; environmental law; and an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services (IPBES). Decision 25/4 on IEG established a regionally representative, consultative group of ministers or high-level representatives. The decision requested the group to present a set of options for improving IEG to GCSS-11/GMEF with a view to providing input to the UN General Assembly.

GCSS-11/GMEF: GCSS-11/GMEF convened from 24-26 February 2010 in Bali, Indonesia, and adopted eight decisions on: IEG; enhanced coordination across the UN, including the Environment Management Group; a follow-up report on the environmental situation in Gaza; IPBES; strengthening the environmental response in Haiti; oceans; a consultative process on financing options for chemicals and wastes; and environmental law.

GC-26/GMEF: This meeting took place from 21-24 February 2011 at the UN Office in Nairobi, Kenya. Seventeen decisions were adopted on issues relating to, *inter alia*, chemicals and waste management; the world environment situation; IEG; IPBES; South-South cooperation; and strengthening international cooperation for environmental crisis response.

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

UNCSD PREPCOM II: The second session of the PrepCom took place from 7-8 March 2011, at UN Headquarters in New York. Delegates discussed progress to date and remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development, addressed new and emerging challenges, discussed the scope of a green economy and the idea of a blue economy, and debated the International Framework for Sustainable Development (IFSD). At the end of the meeting, a decision was adopted on the process for preparing the draft outcome document for the UNCSD or Rio+20.

UNCSD SUBREGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETINGS

FOR SIDS: Three subregional preparatory meetings were convened to allow SIDS the opportunity to prepare inputs into the UNCSD preparatory process. The Subregional Preparatory Meeting for the Caribbean convened in Georgetown, Guyana, on 20 June 2011. The Subregional Preparatory Committee for

the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean, and South China Sea (AIMS) countries, convened in Mahé, Seychelles, from 7-8 July 2011. The Pacific Subregional Preparatory Joint Ministerial Meeting convened in Apia, Samoa, from 21-22 July 2011. At these meetings, participants adopted recommendations including on creating a green economy in a blue world, strengthening the regional IFSD, and the value and benefits of engaging in the process and the opportunities that it represents, particularly with regard to the green economy.

UNCSD REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETINGS:

The UN regional economic and social commissions organized preparatory meetings for the UN regions between September and December 2011.

The Regional Preparatory Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean convened in Santiago, Chile, from 7-9 September 2011. The main outcome of this meeting was a set of negotiated conclusions, which included calls for finding better ways to measure the wealth of countries that adequately reflect the three pillars of sustainable development. The **Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting** took place from 16-17 October 2011, in Cairo, Egypt. The **Regional Preparatory Meeting for Asia and the Pacific** took place from 19-20 October 2011, in Seoul, Republic of Korea. Participants adopted the "Seoul Outcome," which was submitted to the Rio+20 Preparatory Committee. The **Regional Preparatory Meeting for Africa** took place from 20-25 October 2011, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Delegates adopted the Africa Consensus Statement to Rio+20. The **Regional Preparatory Meeting for Europe and North America** convened in Geneva, Switzerland, from 1-2 December 2011.

IPBES: The first session of the IPBES met from 3-7 October 2011 at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. Delegates considered the modalities and institutional arrangements for an IPBES and adopted the report of the meeting, which contains draft text on the: functions and operating principles of the platform; functions and structures of bodies that may be established under the platform; rules of procedure for meetings under the platform; process and criteria for selecting the host institution and physical location of the secretariat; and the work programme of the platform.

EYE ON EARTH SUMMIT: This meeting convened from 12-15 December 2011 in Abu Dhabi, UAE. "Rio+20" sessions were held during the Summit, which provided a forum for senior officials, including ministers, to discuss the role of environmental information in supporting decision making. These sessions were responsible for drafting the Eye on Earth Summit Declaration, to be forwarded to UNCSD.

SECOND INTERSESSIONAL MEETING FOR THE

UNCSD: This meeting convened from 15-16 December 2011 at UN Headquarters in New York. Participants discussed the compilation of submissions from states, UN bodies, intergovernmental organizations and Major Groups, and provided comments and guidance for the development, structure and format of a "zero draft" of the outcome document to be adopted at the UNCSD in June 2012.

INITIAL DISCUSSIONS ON THE ZERO DRAFT: The initial discussions on the "zero draft" of the outcome document for Rio+20 took place at UN Headquarters in New York from 25-27 January 2012. At the conclusion of the initial discussions, participants were pleased to note that some progress had been made, with the acceptance of the zero draft as the basis for negotiations, and the commencement of negotiations. They emphasized that the goal of an ambitious, action-oriented document will require equally ambitious negotiations in the 145 days between the end of the January consultations and the first day of Rio+20.