

GPA IGR-2 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 16 OCTOBER 2006

The Second Intergovernmental Review (IGR-2) Meeting of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA) opened on 16 October in Beijing, China, to address national programmes - implementation in action. In the morning, delegates convened in plenary to hear opening remarks, address organizational matters and hold a panel on the way forward with National Programmes of Action (NPAs). In the afternoon, delegates participated in parallel breakout groups to address national implementation in action. At lunchtime and in the evening, a working group met to draft the Beijing Declaration.

PLENARY

OPENING: Zhou Shengxian, Minister of the State Environmental Protection Administration, China, noted that marine and coastal regions have taken a prominent role in his country's development. He underscored that China is a party to the East Asian Seas and the North West Pacific Regional Seas Programmes, and outlined measures to reduce pollutants discharge, including the construction of wastewater treatment plants, the reduction of use of fertilizers and pesticides, and the promotion of marine nature reserves.

Khalid Malik, UN Resident Coordinator in China, emphasized the GPA's role in linking environment and development objectives and addressing challenges at the national and local levels. Identifying the UN as an important facilitator of national-level action, he described the challenges faced by China in light of its rapid economic development. Calling for prioritizing capacity building in developing countries, he highlighted the challenges of mainstreaming GPA objectives across sectors and ministries, and into national development budget, legislation and institutional planning.

Identifying the GPA as the only global programme that addresses the interaction between the marine and freshwater environments, Veerle Vandeweerd, Coordinator, UNEP/GPA Coordination Office, encouraged delegates to celebrate the GPA's achievements and share experiences. She stressed the importance of partnerships among, and involvement and awareness of, all stakeholders, including non-governmental actors, and commended the work of the UNEP Regional Seas Programme.

Ian Matheson, Environment Canada, noted that while 60 countries have now elaborated an NPA, more on-the-ground action is needed. He highlighted the importance of: sharing knowledge and practical experiences in implementation; fostering creative solutions; and building working partnerships and cooperation

among governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and others. He said GPA goals can be achieved with innovation and local knowledge, and that extensive funding is not always needed.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: Delegates elected Zhou Shengxian (China) as IGR-2 Chair; Ferguson Theophilus John (Saint Lucia), Lucia Ana Varga (Romania), and Rejoice Mabudafhasi (South Africa) as Vice-Chairs; and Tom Loughlin (US) as rapporteur. Delegates adopted the provisional agenda (UNEP/GPA/IGR.2/1/add.1) without amendment.

Chair Shengxian suggested that the open-ended working group on the draft elements of the Beijing Declaration (UNEP/GPA/IGR.2/5) be chaired by Mexico, and start work as soon as possible.

THE WAY FORWARD WITH NPAs: Vice-Chair Varga chaired this panel. Vandeweerd drew delegates' attention to the second edition of the GPA Handbook, and referred to the GPA as a "living document." She highlighted the need for domestic political endorsement of NPAs, increased funding, and mainstreaming the GPA in development processes and plans. She called on the three breakout groups on national implementation in action to come up with one-page reports including examples of innovative practices.

COLOMBIA explained that his country's NPA objectives include the protection of human and ecosystem health, and the development of a vision of proper use of marine resources to maintain biodiversity. He outlined key NPA elements, including scientific research, technology transfer, institutional strengthening, clean production, education, and capacity building.

FINLAND described the threats faced by the Baltic Sea environment and highlighted lessons learned in elaborating and implementing its NPA, namely the importance of: involving all relevant stakeholders at the earliest planning stages; incorporating scientific data and monitoring activities in elaborating future actions; and cooperating with riparian States.

INDIA noted that municipal waste is the single largest source of coastal pollution in his country and described a national programme to treat sewage over the next five years. He said his government has improved legal and institutional structures and adopted a new management approach, using guiding principles related to ecological and livelihood security, social and gender equity, and the ecosystem approach.

Underscoring the vulnerability of small island developing States (SIDS), MAURITIUS described national measures to address the discharge of domestic waste, agricultural runoff, and industrial waste, noting the establishment of a national committee to monitor coastal water quality. He called for capacity building at all levels, and strengthened international and regional cooperation.

SOUTH AFRICA described national efforts to implement the GPA and the JPOI, including: drafting new legislation on buffer zones to protect coastal areas; formalizing a national operational policy on wastewater disposal; and banning off-road vehicle use in certain coastal areas. She noted active regional cooperation in, *inter alia*, mobilizing a task force to address wastewater issues.

The US highlighted national and regional achievements since IGR-1, including the adoption of a national ocean action plan based on ecosystem approaches. He described successful case studies of state and federal government cooperation in the Chesapeake Bay and the Gulf of Mexico, and a partnership for the wider Caribbean that stresses technical support for implementation of NPAs.

In an ensuing discussion, delegates addressed risk-based management approaches, research and monitoring, and environmental education. They also discussed ways to accommodate differing community values in setting targets.

THE WAY FORWARD WITH NPAS

MAINSTREAMING THE GPA INTO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING: This session was chaired by Dagmara Berbalk (Germany), with Hamidreza Ghaffarzadeh, Caspian Sea Regional Seas Programme, as rapporteur. CHINA described successful actions towards the development of an NPA, highlighting an inter-ministerial planning committee, as well as linkages with existing laws and regulations. BRAZIL said effective strategies should encompass: decentralized management; multi-sectoral arrangements; capacity building; strengthening inter-agency bodies; and sharing decision making among all levels of government and society. BANGLADESH highlighted priority actions regarding coastal fishing and tourism, land use patterns, and climate change. He called for community involvement and coordination across all sectors. Presenting a donor country's perspective, BELGIUM identified as priorities: addressing environmental concerns as a prerequisite for sustainable development; working with existing multilateral organizations; and strengthening cooperation among UN agencies. The EUROPEAN COMMISSION (EC) highlighted the EU Marine Strategy, noting its emphasis on the Regional Seas Conventions, and the EU Water Initiative, which aims at achieving integrated river basin management. He advocated prioritizing the environment, particularly water, in poverty reduction strategy papers. UNDP-CHINA stressed the importance of linking the GPA to the MDGs and highlighted the China Biodiversity Partnership Framework, which cooperates with UN agencies, bilateral partners, NGOs, and international financial institutions. The WORLD BANK said its NPA support consists of technical assistance and capacity building, and lending or grants for project implementation.

Participants discussed: environmental impacts of ship breaking; conflicts of interest between different sectors; the role of private sector and overseas countries' participation; empowerment of local communities; involvement of non-coastal source countries in GPA discussions; poverty as a root cause of land-based sources of pollution; loans versus grants financing; and the ecosystem approach as a key aspect of an integrated approach.

FINANCING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GPA: This session was chaired by Magnús Jóhannesson (Iceland), with Taha Zadari (Saudi Arabia) as rapporteur. Chair Jóhannesson noted the session's objective to identify mechanisms to increase financing for GPA implementation. INDIA presented on national problems with coastal dumping of municipal wastes, and highlighted current negotiations with the World Bank for funding of a coastal management plan. JAMAICA listed national funding sources for NPA implementation, including annual government subvention, loans for large capital projects and grants from external sources. PARTNERSHIPS IN ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT FOR THE SEAS OF EAST ASIA outlined public-private partnership approaches and work with the Global Environment Facility

(GEF), the World Bank and UNDP to create an investment fund for pollution prevention and a project preparation revolving fund. SRI LANKA presented on national initiatives, including the development of market-based instruments for the strategic planning of NPA implementation. The GEF noted current testing of strategic partnerships and investment funds, and potential investigation of regional and project preparation revolving funds. FINLAND highlighted national application of the polluter-pays principle. The ORGANIZATION OF EASTERN CARIBBEAN STATES provided information on the ongoing development of an innovative, dedicated and flexible financial mechanism for GPA implementation in the wider Caribbean.

Delegates discussed, *inter alia*: revolving funds and repaying such funding; ensuring that regional banks prioritize funding for environmental projects; private sector involvement, in addition to public funding; willingness to pay when applying the polluter-pays principle; raising community awareness; the importance of national legislation and standards setting; and low-cost waste management technologies.

STRENGTHENING LEGISLATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS: This session was chaired by Elizabeth Thompson (Barbados), with Ardi Stoios-Braken (the Netherlands) as rapporteur. UNEP/GPA Coordinator Vandeweerd called upon panel members to indicate concrete actions and critical elements required for implementing NPAs. Chair Thompson stressed that legal and institutional frameworks underpin efforts to implement NPAs. She stated that NPA implementation lacked enforcement mechanisms and that the responsibilities of various institutions are unclear. She called for identifying opportunities to improve legislation and compliance, and enhance integration between authorities interactively. ISRAEL described the status of its NPA, including the institutional setup, legislation and methods used in enforcement. He emphasized the need for raising public awareness, and cited the experience of employing civilian volunteers with the right to issue fines. The EC described the evolution and integration of EU water legislation, in particular the key elements of the EC Water Framework Directive. He emphasized the need for dialogue with stakeholders. GUATEMALA presented on its NPA, focusing on coordination, and explained the operation of the existing legal frameworks, including constraints and challenges encountered.

Participants discussed: national political endorsement; ways of improving coordination and regulatory tools; incentives; a holistic approach; strategies for ensuring compliance; risk analysis; use of monitoring systems; ways of involving civil society and bringing together stakeholders in formulating NPAs; and the need for qualified manpower and financial resources.

IN THE CORRIDORS

IGR-2 set off at a lively pace on Monday morning, with delegates sharing national experiences and extolling the GPA. A streak of apprehension, however, ran through conversations: delegates were overheard lamenting the impending pull-out of some countries that have been providing support for the UNEP/GPA Coordination Office in The Hague. As a participant observed ruefully, this comes precisely at a time when the GPA needs all the profile raising it can get.

More confident echoes were heard from the Beijing Declaration drafting group, whose negotiation had started at lunchtime. After a preliminary reading of the draft elements of the declaration, the group's impression seemed to be generally positive. One delegate noted that by allowing the Stakeholder Forum, an NGO that aims to facilitate stakeholders' engagement in the development and implementation of sustainable development policy, to present its views on the draft elements, the drafting group had shown open-mindedness and flexibility, two necessary qualities for a smooth negotiation.