



THE GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM AND SIXTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL 29 – 31 MAY 2000

The first Global Ministerial Environment Forum – in the form of the Sixth Special Session of the Governing Council (GC) of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) – opens today in Malmö, Sweden. The purpose of the Global Ministerial Environment Forum (the Forum) is to institute a process for regaining policy coherence in the field of the environment, in direct response to the need for such action emphasized in the 1998 report of the UN Secretary-General on environment and human settlements. Environment ministers will discuss major global environmental challenges in the new century as well as strategic policy responses to such issues. Due consideration will also be given to the need to ensure the effective and efficient functioning of UNEP governance mechanisms, as well as possible financial implications, and the need to maintain the role of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) as the main forum for high-level policy debate on sustainable development. The outcome of the Forum will be presented to the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. Approximately 600 delegates are expected at the Forum, including more than 100 environment ministers.

Forum discussions will cut across a number of economic and social sectors and have three themes: (1) Identification of the major environmental challenges of the 21st century. The basis for this assessment will be UNEP's second Global Environment Outlook report (GEO-2000). (2) The role of the private sector. Delegates will consider the importance of private investment and trade to promoting development in an increasingly globalized world and the potential role of the financial and technology sectors in reorienting markets towards environmentally sustainable development. And (3), the role of civil society. While recognizing the importance of cultural diversity and differing development paths, Forum participants may explore how local communities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the media, and the general public could promote a global consensus on tackling shared environmental problems such as climate change, land degradation, and the loss of biodiversity. The discussions on these agenda items will be assisted by keynote statements from a number of internationally recognized scientists, academics and corporate and civil society leaders, who will also serve as resource persons during the three days. The ministers will also consider a report by UNEP Executive Director Klaus Töpfer on UNEP's activities and the organization's contribution to the implementation of Agenda 21.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL

In 1972, UNEP was established as a result of the UN Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm from 5-16 June 1972. Additionally, the conference created an action plan for environmental policy, an Environment Fund, and a declaration of 26 principles on the human environment. Established to provide a forum for the international community to address major and emerging environmental policy issues, the UNEP Governing Council (GC) generally meets on a biennial basis with special sessions convened in between. The GC consists of 58 States that serve four-year terms on the basis of the following equitable geographic distribution: 16 African, 13 Asian, 13 Western European and Others, 10 Latin American and Caribbean, and 6 Eastern European States. The GC reports to the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and is charged with: promoting international environmental cooperation and recommending policies to this end; providing policy guidance for the direction and coordination of environmental programmes in the UN system; reviewing the state of the global environment; and promoting the contribution of relevant scientific and other professional communities to the acquisition, assessment and exchange of environmental knowledge and information and to the technical aspects of the formulation and implementation of environmental programmes within the UN system.

In addition to monitoring and assessing the state of the environment and disseminating this information to governments and NGOs, the GC's achievements include the initiation of negotiations on many major environmental conventions, including the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade (PIC Convention).

UNCED: The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) reaffirmed UNEP's mandate and called for an enhanced and strengthened role for UNEP and its GC. The GC was called on to continue its role with regard to policy guidance and coordination, taking into account the development perspective. Agenda 21 also listed 14 priority areas on which UNEP should concentrate, *inter alia*, strengthening its catalytic role in promoting environmental activities throughout the UN system; promoting international cooperation; coordinating and

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promoting scientific research; disseminating environmental information; raising general awareness; and further developing international environmental law.

19th GOVERNING COUNCIL: Initially, the 19th session of the GC convened from 27 January - 7 February 1997. However, the meeting was suspended on the final day when delegates could not agree on a proposal for the creation of a high-level committee to provide policy guidance to UNEP. As a result, officials from 34 countries met in Geneva on 21 March 1997, and decided to create a new multinational committee to mediate the dispute and offer advice on UNEP's future. The 19th session resumed at UNEP Headquarters from 3-4 April 1997, where delegates established the High-Level Committee of Ministers and Officials (HLCOMO) as a subsidiary organ of the GC. The HLCOMO was given the mandate to: consider the international environmental agenda and to make reform and policy recommendations to the GC; provide guidance and advice to UNEP's Executive Director; enhance UNEP's collaboration and cooperation with other multilateral bodies, including environmental conventions and their secretariats; and help mobilize adequate and predictable financial resources for UNEP. The HLCOMO consists of 36 members, elected by the GC from members of the UN and its specialized agencies. Members serve for two years and represent regions as reflected by the current structure of UNEP's GC. Currently, the Committee convenes meetings at least once a year in Nairobi but may also convene elsewhere in connection with major international environmental meetings.

Delegates also adopted the Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of UNEP, which, *inter alia*, revised the UNEP Committee of Permanent Representatives' (CPR) mandate to: review, monitor and assess the implementation of decisions of the GC on administrative, budgetary and programme matters; review UNEP's draft programme of work and budget; review reports requested of the Secretariat by the GC on the effectiveness, efficiency and transparency of the Secretariat's work; and prepare draft decisions for consideration by the GC based on inputs from the Secretariat. The Nairobi Declaration was formally endorsed at UN General Assembly Special Session for the review of the implementation of Agenda 21 (UNGASS) in June 1997.

FIFTH SPECIAL SESSION: The GC held its fifth special session in May 1998. This session adopted decisions on the evaluation of UNEP's management and administrative support; revitalization, reform and strengthening of UNEP; the contributions of UNEP to CSD-7; freshwater; the PIC Convention; the Global Environment Facility; and land degradation. The session decided to review the status of UNEP's ongoing reform at the 20th session to provide the 55th session of the UNGA with its policy conclusions on institutional arrangements within the UN system and the role of UNEP in that context. The special session also confirmed the member States elected to the HLCOMO.

UN TASK FORCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS: At the 51st session of the UNGA, the Secretary-General issued the results of a review of UN activities entitled "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform" (A/51/950). In the section on environment, habitat and sustainable development, the report reviewed developments since UNCED, including the proliferation of new actors in the field, the emergence of the CSD as an important policy forum, the augmented environmental capacities in UN organizations, and the disappointing response to the needs of developing countries for new and additional resources. The report concluded that there was a need for a more integrated systematic approach to policies and programmes

throughout the range of UN activities in the economic and social field by mainstreaming the UN's commitment to sustainable development. To initiate this process, the UN Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements was established under the chairmanship of the Executive Director of UNEP. In 1998, the conclusions and recommendations of the Task Force were forwarded to the 53rd session of the UNGA in the Report of the Secretary-General on environment and human settlements (A/53/463). The report contained recommendations for, *inter alia*: the establishment of an Environmental Management Group; an annual, ministerial-level, global environmental forum; universal membership of the GC; and several measures to further incorporate and involve civil society.

After months of informal consultations, on 28 July 1999, the General Assembly adopted resolution 53/242, which, *inter alia*: requests the Secretary-General to strengthen the UN Office in Nairobi; supports the establishment of an Environmental Management Group to enhance inter-agency coordination in the field of environment and human settlements; and welcomes the proposal to establish an annual, ministerial-level, global environmental forum under the UNEP GC.

20th GOVERNING COUNCIL: The 20th session of the GC took place at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, from 1-5 February 1999, and marked the first meeting of the Council since the adoption of the Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of UNEP, the UN General Assembly Special Session to review the implementation of Agenda 21, and the appointment of Dr. Klaus Töpfer as UNEP Executive Director. Approximately 600 delegates, including ministers and senior government officials from over 100 countries, as well as representatives from environmental NGOs, UN agencies, international organizations, business and industry, and youth organizations attended the week-long meeting. The meeting demonstrated restored faith in UNEP as the prominent UN agency with responsibility for the environment. The GC took some 30 decisions on a range of topics including: the Environment Fund and administrative and other budgetary matters; policy issues, including the state of the environment, coordination and cooperation within and outside the UN; governance of UNEP and emerging policy issues; preparations for CSD-7; and linkages among and support to environmental and environment-related conventions.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

OPENING PLENARY: The Forum will convene at 11:00 am in the Scania Convention Centre to adopt the agenda and the organization of work for the session. Statements are expected from: Ingvar Carlsson (Former Swedish Prime Minister); Massumeh Ebtekar (Vice President of Iran); Kofi Annan (Secretary-General of the United Nations) by video; and Klaus Töpfer (Executive Director of UNEP).

MINISTERIAL CONSULTATIONS: Following the opening Plenary, ministerial consultations will begin on "Major Environmental Challenges in the New Century." Professor Mario Molina (MIT) and Dr. M.S. Swaminathan (M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation) are expected to serve as resource persons for this item. These closed meetings will be televised.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE: The COW, including senior officials and permanent representatives, will convene following the opening session to consider the "Report of the Executive Director on the activities of UNEP" and the "Malmö Declaration." A working group is expected to be established to discuss the Declaration.