



## **TWENTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME'S GOVERNING COUNCIL/GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM: 21-25 FEBRUARY 2005**

The 23rd session of the UN Environment Programme's Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum opens today at the UN Office at Nairobi, Kenya, and will continue through 25 February 2005. Ministerial-level discussions will focus on the implementation of the internationally-agreed development goals contained in the Millennium Declaration as they relate to gender and environment, as well as policy issues related to water, sanitation and human settlements, and international environmental governance. The Committee of the Whole will discuss draft decisions on, *inter alia*, international environmental governance; Environment Fund budgets; proposed biennial programme and support budget for 2006–2007; administrative and other budgetary matters; state of the environment and UNEP's contribution to addressing substantive environmental challenges; chemicals management; and UNEP's water policy and strategy and relevant water-related issues. Various side events, as well as *The Institute@GC-23/GMEF* will also take place throughout the week.

### **A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNEP GC/GMEF**

As a result of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, UN General Assembly in its resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 1972 officially established UNEP as the central node for global environmental cooperation and treaty making. The resolution also established the UNEP Governing Council (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 this, and the provision of policy guidance for the direction and coordination of environmental programmes in the UN system. In 1992, the UN Conference on Environment and Development reaffirmed UNEP's mandate as the principal environment body within the UN system and supported an enhanced and strengthened role for UNEP and its GC.

The Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF) is constituted by the UNEP Governing Council as envisaged in UN General Assembly resolution 53/242. The purpose of the GMEF is to institute a process for ensuring policy coherence in the environment field, as proposed in the 1998 report of the UN Secretary-General on environment and human settlements.

**19TH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL:** In 1997, the Governing Council met for its 19th session (GC-19), the first part of which took place from 27 January to 7 February,

and the second part from 3–4 April, at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. At GC-19, delegates adopted the *Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of UNEP*. In the Nairobi Declaration, the mandate of UNEP was revitalized and expanded to include: analyzing the state of the global environment; assessing global and regional environmental trends; providing policy advice and early warning information on environmental threats; and catalyzing and promoting international cooperation and action, based on the best scientific and technical capabilities available. The Nairobi Declaration was formally endorsed in June 1997 at the 19th Special Session of the UN General Assembly.

### **20TH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL:**

The 20th session of the Governing Council took place from 1–5 February 1999, in Nairobi, and marked the first meeting of the Council since the appointment of Klaus Töpfer as UNEP's fourth Executive Director. The Council adopted over 30 decisions on a range of topics, including: the Environment Fund, administrative and budgetary matters; linkages among and support to environmental and environment-related conventions; and policy issues, including the state of the environment, coordination and cooperation within and outside the UN, UNEP governance and emerging policy issues.

**SIXTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL/GMEF:** The sixth Special Session of the 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 agreed that the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 should review the requirements for a greatly strengthened institutional structure for international environmental governance (IEG).

**21ST SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL/GMEF:** The 21st session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC-21/GMEF) took place from 5–9 February 2001, in Nairobi. A high-level ministerial dialogue discussed implementation of the Nairobi Declaration and the Malmö Ministerial Declaration. GC-21/GMEF also 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. The IGM met five times, and reported on its work to GCSS-7/GMEF.

**SEVENTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL/GMEF:** The seventh Special Session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GCSS-7/GMEF) was held from 13–15 February 2002, in Cartagena, Colombia. Delegates adopted the IGM report on IEG, which notes that the international environmental



governance process had highlighted the need for a high-level environment policy forum as one of the cornerstones of an effective system of international environmental governance, and noted that the GC/GMEF should be utilized more effectively in promoting international cooperation in the field of the environment, providing broad policy advice and guidance, and identifying global environmental priorities. The IGM report also recommended that in order to play its role as the high-level environment policy forum in the UN system, the GC/GMEF should: keep under review the world environment situation and develop policy responses in order to ensure that emerging environmental problems of wide international significance receive appropriate and adequate consideration based on sound science; provide general policy guidance for the direction and coordination of environmental programmes and make cross-cutting recommendations; promote international cooperation in the field of the environment and recommend policies to this end; and strengthen the coordination and institutional requirements for international environmental policy. The report also highlighted the need to ensure the universal participation of Member States of the UN and its specialized agencies in the work of the GC/GMEF, and to strengthen UNEP's financial situation.

In addition to the IGM report, delegates adopted decisions related to: a strategic approach to chemicals management at the global level; compliance with and enforcement of multilateral environmental agreements; the development of a strategy for the active engagement of civil society, the private sector and Major Groups in the work of UNEP; the implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities; and the environmental situation in the occupied Palestinian territories.

**22ND SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL/GMEF:** The 22nd session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC-22/GMEF) took place from 3-7 February 2003, in Nairobi. GC-22/GMEF adopted more than 40 decisions on issues relating to IEG, post-conflict environmental assessment, UNEP's water policy and strategy, a strategic approach to chemicals management, a mercury programme, support to Africa, production and consumption patterns, and the environment and cultural diversity. Delegates also adopted UNEP's Programme of Work and Budget for the biennium 2004-2005.

**EIGHTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL/GMEF:** The eighth Special Session of UNEP's Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GCSS-8/GMEF) 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. GCSS-8/GMEF also adopted four decisions on: small island developing States; waste management; regional annexes; and the implementation of decision SS.VII/1 on IEG.

### **INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS**

**GLOBAL WOMEN'S ASSEMBLY ON ENVIRONMENT: WOMEN AS THE VOICE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT:** UNEP's first Global Women's Assembly on Environment: Women as the Voice for the Environment (WAVE) convened from 11-13 October 2004, in Nairobi. The WAVE Assembly adopted a Manifesto and Recommendations highlighting the crucial role of women in promoting: women's leadership in the environment; the participation of indigenous, rural and urban women in decision making; a gender-culture environment; local-global linkages; environment and health linkages; capacity building and education; and peace.

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL WORKING GROUP ON THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL STRATEGIC PLAN ON TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING:** GCSS-8/GMEF established an Intergovernmental Working

Group to prepare a draft Intergovernmental Strategic Plan on Technology Support and Capacity Building. Chaired by the GC President Arcardo Ntagazwa (Tanzania), the Intergovernmental Working Group held three meetings in 2004 (New York, June; Nairobi, September; and Bali, December). At its third session, held from 2-4 December 2004, in Jimbaran-Bali, Indonesia, the Intergovernmental Working Group agreed to the "Bali Strategic Plan" for Technology Support and Capacity Building. The "Bali Strategic Plan" aims to strengthen the capacity of governments of developing countries and of countries with economies in transition at all levels and provide systematic, targeted, long and short-term measures for technology support and capacity building. The Plan includes sections on objectives, strategic considerations, implementation, coordination mechanism, and financial mechanisms. The Plan has been forwarded to GC-23/GMEF for adoption.

**59TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY:** In its resolution 59/226, the General Assembly emphasizes the need for UNEP, within its mandate, to further contribute to sustainable development programmes, to the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation at all levels, and to the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development; reiterates the need for stable, adequate and predictable financial resources for UNEP; and underlines the need to consider adequate reflection of all administrative and management costs of the Programme in the context of the UN regular budget. On universal membership of the GC, the General Assembly notes the differences in views expressed so far, and requests the Secretary-General to submit a report incorporating those views to the Assembly for consideration at the sixty-first session. On interagency cooperation, the General Assembly emphasizes the need to further enhance coordination and cooperation among the relevant UN organizations in the promotion of the environmental dimension of sustainable development, and in this respect welcomes the continued participation of UNEP in the UN Development Group.

**TUNZA GLOBAL YOUTH RETREAT:** Held from 16-18 February 2005 in Nairobi, the Global Youth Retreat brought together 44 participants and leaders of environmental youth organizations from 34 countries. The Retreat provided a forum for youth representatives to examine how UNEP is working with young people both globally and regionally. Major issues addressed by participants included the: role of youth in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); review of the implementation of the TUNZA Commitments; and environmental impact of the tsunami disaster. During the Retreat, members of the UNEP Youth Advisory Council were elected. A statement from participants will be presented to GC-23/GMEF.

**SIXTH GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM:** Held from 19-20 February 2005 in Nairobi, the sixth Global Civil Society Forum brought together more than 100 civil society representatives from all around the world. Participants discussed the main topics at stake during the GC/GMEF, including UNEP's programme of work and the MDGs. A statement from participants will be presented to GC-23/GMEF.

**GLOBAL CONSULTATION ON THE FOURTH GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT OUTLOOK REPORT:** The global intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder consultation on the fourth Global Environment Outlook (GEO-4) was held from 19-20 February 2005. The meeting discussed: the GEO report series and GEO-4 design process; the objective, scope and overall outline of GEO-4; consideration of the key questions that GEO-4 should address; and preparations for GEO-4 report and related capacity-building activities. The meeting agreed on a statement to be delivered to GC-23/GMEF.