



GC-23/GMEF HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 2005

Delegates to GC-23/GMEF met throughout the day in the Committee of the Whole to consider draft decisions on poverty and the environment, and on sustainable procurement. The Plenary met in the morning and afternoon to consider CSD-13, chemicals, the Bali Strategic Plan, and the state of the environment. Contact groups on the Programme of Work and Budget, and the drafting group met throughout the day and into the night. Informal consultations on gender and the environment and on chemicals management also took place.

PLENARY

INPUT TO THE THIRTEENTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: John Ashe, Chair of CSD-13, expressed satisfaction with the outcome and recommendations made during the ministerial consultations. He highlighted the importance of: addressing poverty and human development; mobilizing financial resources, both public and private; involving local-level stakeholders; accelerating IWRM; and enhancing the role of women.

Verle Vandeweerd, UNEP, said that the ecosystem approach, IWRM and poverty reduction are three important elements in water management. Halifa Drammeh, UNEP, emphasized the need to improve interagency cooperation.

The GAMBIA, BANGLADESH and SUDAN stressed the importance of IWRM, sanitation and the implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan. The US outlined its expectations of CSD-13, noting the need to, *inter alia*: develop revolving funds; prepare water safety and watershed management plans; and implement IWRM.

INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE: THE BALI STRATEGIC PLAN: Adnan Amin, UNEP, introduced the background and process leading to the development of the Bali Strategic Plan. He said the Secretariat is developing a plan and a resource mobilization strategy, and is making arrangements for its implementation. He stressed the regional aspects of implementation and the need for adequate funding.

Many speakers supported the Bali Strategic Plan and emphasized the importance of its implementation. TUVALU said UNEP should develop linkages between the Plan and the Mauritius Strategy. MAURITIUS underscored the importance of strengthening UNEP's regional offices and stressed the need for proper coordination, monitoring and follow-up activities. He suggested that the GC/GMEF could perform such a role. INDONESIA stressed the importance of know-how and capacity building, and the need for adequate funding. KUWAIT, supported by SUDAN, SAUDIA ARABIA and the LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES, suggested adding "adaptation of cleaner fossil fuel technologies" under the indicative list of main areas of technology support and capacity-building activities.

TUVALU urged UNEP to establish a subregional office in the Pacific, specifying that it would help SIDS implement environmental activities and access financial assistance.

CANADA highlighted the importance of multilateralism in strengthening IEG. The EU, SPAIN, FRANCE, and NORWAY reiterated their support to the strengthening of IEG, including universal membership. YOUTH stressed the need for action and the inclusion of youth in country delegations.

CHEMICALS: The Chair of the chemicals management contact group Viveka Bohn presented an overview of the SAICM process. She highlighted: the importance of the strategic approaches taken within SAICM; the need for technical support, capacity building and awareness raising in developing countries and countries with economies in transition; and the modalities for financing the SAICM process.

SENEGAL emphasized the need to focus on African countries and the importance of adequate funding. The EU stated that they would actively work for the adoption of SAICM in 2006. INDONESIA urged UNEP to enhance regional collaboration and partnerships. KENYA emphasized that SAICM's objectives should not be construed as a means to control trade.

STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING: Steve Lonergan, UNEP, summarized the emerging environmental problems identified by UNEP and outlined the findings contained in the 2004 Global Environment Outlook Year Book. The IPCC said the main objective of UNFCCC is to stabilize greenhouse gas levels at a threshold which is safe to the environment and human beings. In the discussion delegates supported the strengthening of UNEP's programme on assessment, monitoring and early warning, and emphasized the importance of capacity building.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

POVERTY AND THE ENVIRONMENT: The G-77/CHINA presented a new draft decision on poverty and the environment (UNEP/GC.23/CRP.6). The US said it was opposed to newly introduced decisions and, with the EU, noted it would need to consult with the capital. Noting that poverty is a central theme of the meeting and introducing new decisions is a common practice in the GC, ARGENTINA expressed concern at the unwillingness by some developed countries to consider the decision. NORWAY, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION and the LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES expressed support for the issues addressed in the draft decision and noted the need for a discussion on the Rules of Procedure at a future session.

STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND DEVELOPING DISASTER PREVENTION, PREPAREDNESS, MITIGATION AND EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE INDIAN OCEAN TSUNAMI DISASTER: Chair Nobs presented, and delegates agreed, to the draft decision (UNEP/GC.23/CW/CRP.2).



GENDER AND THE ENVIRONMENT: Informal consultations facilitated by Sweden continued throughout the day. In the afternoon, Sweden reported that several paragraphs remain contentious and noted that delegations are communicating with capitals on the text. He requested, and Chair Nobs agreed, to allow for more time for informal consultations.

PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MANAGEMENT OF MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTES: MOROCCO presented a draft plan of action for the development of the management of municipal solid wastes (UNEP/GC.23/CW/CRP.1). At Morocco's request, delegates agreed to defer consideration of the decision to the next GC/GMEF.

SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT PROGRAMME FOR UNEP ACQUISITIONS: Delegates considered amendments proposed by the EU and the US to the draft decision (UNEP/GC.23/L.1). The US proposed deleting three references to equity, noting that it was unclear what it meant in this context. The EU said it was opposed to the preambular text on trade and it did not want references to trade or to the WTO in the draft decision. The G-77/CHINA clarified that equity meant no discrimination among providers. SOUTH AFRICA said it meant a geographical balance between developed and developing countries in the procurement of services. The US proposed replacing "equity" with "non-discriminatory." The EU suggested including a reference to "considerations of geographical balance," and NORWAY proposed "geographical neutrality." MEXICO said equity meant "equal access," and expressed concern at the inclusion of concepts relating to geographical balance because it would limit purchasing opportunities, making them less equitable. Brazil, for the G-77/CHINA, said it preferred no decision on procurement at all, but if one was adopted, it should include a reference to equity. The US agreed to delete the brackets around "equity," but suggested maintaining the reference to trade, bracketed by the EU. The EU opposed retaining the paragraph on trade. The G-77/CHINA, the EU and the US met in a small group to come up with a new compromise text. In the informal consultations, delegates discussed: including a reference to the mutual supportiveness of trade and environment and development with a view to achieving sustainable development; deleting the reference to trade, which was bracketed by the EU; and removing the brackets around "equity."

CONTACT GROUPS

CHEMICALS MANAGEMENT: The chemicals contact group met in informal sessions throughout the day to finalize the draft omnibus decision on chemicals management. In the evening session, participants considered paragraphs: urging governments and other actors to develop and implement partnerships on mercury; requesting the Executive Director to present a progress report on the decision's implementation; and assessing the need for further action on mercury, including the possibility of a legally-binding instrument at GC-24/GMEF.

PROGRAMME OF WORK AND BUDGET: On the budget for the Bali Strategic Plan, delegates agreed to a revised text stating that the Executive Director's proposal for the further implementation of the Plan should include an assessment of the availability of requisite technical and financial resources, as well as the implications of the Plan for UNEP's Programme of Work and Budget.

On a paragraph on shifting emphasis from delivery of outputs to achievements of results, the G-77/CHINA stressed that the allocation of resources to programme activities should not be conditional on results. Delegates agreed to include a note in the report of the contact group stating that the shift is solely intended to encourage good management.

On the EU's proposal for a wider application of the voluntary indicative scale of contributions, no consensus was reached on whether the group should accept any agreed text from other discussions. JAPAN, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION and the US said it is not necessary to mention the voluntary indicative scale in the draft decision. The G-77/CHINA and others supported its inclusion. CANADA noted that the scale has helped to increase UNEP's funding and donor base, and the EU highlighted the

need to ensure there is enough income to carry out activities under the Programme of Work. During the ensuing discussion, the US suggested replacing the EU's proposal with a text that urges governments to further support the strengthening of the Environment Fund through the mechanism envisaged in GCSS-7/GMEF decisions. CANADA proposed text with a reference to all voluntary means outlined in GCSS-7/GMEF decision GCSS.VII/I on IEG, and language calling upon countries to use the scale as a tool to further enhance predictability in financing the Programme of Work and broadening the base of contributions. Delegates considered these options, but could not reach consensus.

Regarding the Executive Director's authority to reallocate resources, the US suggested adding the phrase "in consultation with the CPR" to the original text. Supporting this, JAPAN stressed the need for further information regarding resource reallocation. The Secretariat said the US suggestion would prejudice the Executive Director's flexibility in reallocating resources. He also explained that the CPR regularly receives reports from the Executive Director on budget issues. SWITZERLAND, supported by INDIA and MEXICO, and opposed by the G-77/CHINA and the EU, proposed a 10% reallocation authority without need to consult with the CPR. The US presented new text requesting the Executive Director to consult with the CPR if he needs to reallocate funds in excess of 10%. The EU proposed text maintaining the 20% authority in the present form and requesting the CPR to consider the issue and make recommendations to GC-24/GMEF. No agreement was reached.

DRAFTING GROUP: The drafting group conducted another reading of the draft decision on UNEP's water policy and strategy. The discussion centered on several issues, most of which were extensively discussed on Wednesday, on: whether to "adopt" or "take note of" the strategy and its status; the ecosystem approach, promoted by Switzerland and Mexico; and the G-77/China's proposal for a comprehensive framework on sanitation.

The discussion of the draft decision on the IEG addressed the paragraph on "the need for a strengthened institutional structure for IEG," which several countries suggested deleting. CANADA proposed text with a separate paragraph on good governance, and embracing international level efforts. The paragraph on "ongoing consideration of UNEP's governing structure" was amended by the US, and supported by a number of countries, to refer exclusively to "the important but complex issue of universal membership." There was discussion on whether to refer to a broader donor base and fair burden-sharing in the context of strengthening UNEP's financial base.

Much of the section on the Bali Strategic Plan was agreed upon, leaving bracketed text on the Executive Director's resource-mobilization strategy for the Plan.

In the discussion on the strengthening of UNEP's scientific base, most countries expressed preference for a process where the Executive Director would prepare a report for GCSS-9/GMEF, taking into account governments' views on the proposed Environmental Watch framework.

The drafting group continued long into the night.

IN THE CORRIDORS

The controversy generated by the seemingly innocuous US proposal on a UNEP sustainable procurement programme led to a Wednesday night debate, which resurfaced in the COW on Thursday. Developing countries saw the text as inviting discrimination against products and services originating in poor countries if they fail to comply with environmental standards. It was made clear that they would prefer to drop a green procurement decision altogether. One delegate expressed concern on who will decide on the holder of authority to certify a product as "environmentally sustainable." Hopefully, a small group of interested delegations may work out a compromise to be presented on Friday.