

## GC-25/GMEF HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 17 FEBRUARY 2009

On Tuesday morning, GC-25/GMEF delegates convened in ministerial consultations and the Committee of the Whole (COW). In the afternoon, deliberations continued in the COW and in three parallel ministerial roundtable discussions on the theme: "Global crises: national chaos? Towards a green economy." Two contact groups, on the budget and programme of work for 2010-2011 and chemicals management, also met throughout the day. The drafting group on state of the environment and environmental law convened in the afternoon.

### MINISTERIAL CONSULTATIONS

This session consisted of a keynote presentation and a panel discussion on "Global crises: national chaos? Towards a green economy."

**KEYNOTE PRESENTATION:** Pavan Sukdev, Green Economy Initiative, highlighted a green economy as a "new engine for growth" comprising renewable energy, building retrofits, sustainable transport and agriculture and ecological infrastructure. He underscored the need to protect the vulnerable, and, on policy, he emphasized: rethinking subsidies; rewarding unrecognized benefits; penalizing uncaptured costs; and sharing the benefits of conservation.

**PANEL DISCUSSION:** Sigmar Gabriel, Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Germany, urged environment ministers to take the lead in the green economy, noting that they are the "ministers of sustainable economic success as well." He said that a stable political framework and a skilled workforce are essential preconditions for this.

Jacqueline Cramer, Minister for Environment and Space, the Netherlands, underscored urgent action and requested UNEP to draw up a "green economy action list" to guide decision makers. UNEP Executive Director Steiner confirmed this would be finalized in time for the G-20 Summit.

Byung-Wook Lee, Vice-Minister for Environment, Republic of Korea, reported on measures taken under the new low carbon economic growth strategy, which includes investing 38 billion dollars in the environmental sector.

Observing that "if we all take risks together, there is no risk," Hasan Mahmud, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh, urged support for developing countries in their transition to a green economy.

Stanislav Ananiev, Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Russian Federation, stressed that international discussions should consider differing country circumstances to develop a shared vision for sustainable development.

Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker, International Panel for Sustainable Resource Management, urged governments to be more proactive in creating incentives to reduce carbon emissions and investment in renewable and efficient energy and production. David Foster, Blue-Green Alliance, called for investments in smart, sustainable solutions, such as creating jobs in the green sector.

In the ensuing discussion, UGANDA pointed to the difficulty of addressing the urban transport sector in a deregulated economy, and accessing the Clean Development Mechanism funds to support such efforts. Cramer responded by stressing the need to mobilize additional support for developing countries, while Mahmud emphasized investing in urban rail infrastructure. On mobilizing support, Gabriel reiterated the need for an enabling environment, and discussed the role of international environmental standards and increasing interaction with the WTO. BRAZIL, however, called for the removal of trade distorting subsidies and opposed international environmental standards that could harm exports. MALAYSIA said better market access for poor countries influences their ability to invest in sustainable development. Emphasizing the private sector's role on the issue of finance, Sukdev also underscored eliminating perverse subsidies on the pricing and production of fossil fuels.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH major group urged governments to act now and consider meaningful and concrete measures to implement a global green economy. The INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS urged support for sustainable production to enhance rural livelihoods.

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**POLICY ISSUES: State of the environment:** COSTA RICA introduced its draft decision on recognizing the Earth Charter as an important ethical framework for promoting and implementing sustainable development, which will be discussed on Wednesday.

Regarding the draft decision on the intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity, there was general support for convening a second meeting, which the REPUBLIC OF KOREA offered to host in June 2009. The US, supported by CANADA and BRAZIL, called for further consideration of the gap analysis. SENEGAL urged establishing the platform as soon as possible. The EU said the draft decision did not

accurately reflect the Putrajaya recommendations and proposed amendments. CHINA favored improving existing mechanisms and structures. BRAZIL, supported by COLOMBIA, said a new panel should only be established under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). JAPAN saw merit in constituting a panel outside the CBD but would not rule out any options.

On environmental law, the secretariat introduced the relevant documents and the draft decision. Delegates generally welcomed the Fourth Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environment Law. CHINA said the Programme should be more focused and give special consideration to capacity building. The US said it would offer specific amendments to the liability guidelines. The EU suggested that guidelines on access to information and liability would assist developing countries. JAPAN called for examination of the technical issues involved in the guidelines, before adopting them at the next GC special session. ARGENTINA favored implementation of existing legislation, rather than creating new laws.

**International environmental governance:** The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) introduced its report "Management Review of the Environmental Governance of the United Nations System."

INDONESIA called for UNEP to be strengthened, with a focus on capacity building and implementing the Bali Strategic Plan. CANADA emphasized the importance of universal membership of the GC and the mainstreaming of the Bali Strategic Plan. URUGUAY stressed the importance of the "One UN" initiative in addressing fragmentation on environment issues at the national and international levels. BRAZIL said the UN GA is the proper locus for decisions on IEG. The US suggested it was premature to take a decision on the JIU report, and that IEG should focus on implementation, a responsibility that lies with national governments. CHINA observed that improving synergies between MEAs is a gradual process that should avoid additional costs. COLOMBIA said the possibility of a new IEG architecture should not be discarded. The EU noted increased institutional fragmentation, and urged full implementation of the Cartagena package.

Delegates heard a secretariat presentation on the Environmental Management Group.

**DRAFT DECISIONS:** The secretariat introduced the omnibus draft decision, (UNEP/GC.25/L.1), which suggests taking note of the Executive Director's reports on waste management, SIDS, support to Africa, South-South cooperation and water policy.

**BUDGET AND PROGRAMME OF WORK:** The EU, supported by NORWAY, welcomed the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) consultations. SERBIA emphasized that the new programme of work should not overlook ongoing activities at the subregional level in southeastern Europe. The US commended UNEP's reform efforts and increased transparency, urging further consultations on a number of aspects. JAPAN called for budget categorization and prioritization to be subject to frequent review. SWITZERLAND said countries should be urged to increase their contributions based on the voluntary indicative scale of contributions. INDONESIA emphasized the importance of the Bali Strategic Plan in prioritizing budget resources. Remaining issues were deferred to the budget contact group.

#### **DRAFTING GROUP**

During deliberations on the draft decision on the world environment situation, the drafting group heard a proposal on the creation of an intergovernmental advisory group to work with stakeholders in conducting a global environmental assessment of environmental change. This raised questions regarding the proposed group's composition, mandate, value and purpose. On

the draft decision concerning environmental law, under the Fourth Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law, discussion centered around the possible duplication of work already being conducted by the UNFCCC, with delegates agreeing to respect the work of UNFCCC and other MEAs. Work on both draft decisions will be continued on Wednesday.

#### **CONTACT GROUPS**

**CHEMICALS:** Delegates discussed the draft decision on mercury, synthesized by Co-Chairs John Roberts (UK) and Festus Bagoora (Uganda), paragraph-by-paragraph. Most delegations supported developing a legally-binding instrument and taking a decision to form an intergovernmental negotiating committee (INC). CHINA, supported by INDIA, preferred to remove the operative paragraphs, and defer any decision on forming an INC to GC-27/GMEF, but agreed to continue negotiating on the basis that the operative text was bracketed.

NORWAY, supported by NIGERIA, MEXICO, URUGUAY and the EU proposed language "recognising that the instrument could in the future be extended to additional substances." This was opposed by the US, CANADA, CHINA and INDONESIA, who stressed the instrument should relate only to mercury. NORWAY agreed to consult bilaterally on this issue.

INDIA, CHINA and INDONESIA supported a focus on intentional mercury emissions. SWITZERLAND agreed that different responses were necessary for unintentional and intentional emissions, but stressed that all mercury emissions must be addressed under the legally-binding instrument.

The co-chairs will produce a revised draft decision reflecting all proposals and amendments for discussion on Wednesday.

Delegates also briefly considered the draft decisions on lead and cadmium and SAICM. After a general exchange of views, the co-chairs agreed to reflect all comments in a revised draft decision Wednesday.

**BUDGET AND PROGRAMME OF WORK:** The UNEP Secretariat introduced the three draft decisions on: proposed biennial programme and support budget for the biennium 2010-2011; management of trust funds and earmarked contributions; and the supplementary budget. Delegates agreed on management of trust funds and the supplementary budget, acknowledging that it had already been discussed extensively by the CPR. They then proceeded with a first reading of the draft decision and agreed on the preambular text and several operational paragraphs. Chair Kalibbala requested the US, EU, Norway and G-77/China to propose language to expedite agreement on the remaining paragraphs on Wednesday.

#### **IN THE BREEZEWAYS**

Discussion of the future global environmental architecture seems to be undergoing resurgence at the Governing Council. Debate is currently centering on a secretariat-produced three-page non-paper, outlining two options for re-launching the stalled IEG process. On Tuesday, the COW avoided discussing the non-paper: delegates were unsure of how to handle it, some were apparently unaware of its existence, and discussion was relegated to the breezeways. One delegate saw a reason for hope in that the new US administration has not yet finalized a position on the issue.

Some delegates were heard referring to a probable group of "friendly ministers," who could aid the flagging UN GA consultations, chaired by the Swiss and Mexican Ambassadors in New York.

Could this GC/GMEF realistically initiate a new robust consultative effort leading to a constructive finale at the 64th session of the GA, and ideally, a new status for UNEP? This was the question being touted in Gigiri on Tuesday.