



## FIRST UN ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY (UNEA) OF THE UN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (UNEP): 23-27 JUNE 2014

The first UNEA of UNEP opens today at the United Nations Office at Nairobi and will continue until 27 June 2014. The overarching theme of the first session is “Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Post-2015 Development Agenda, including sustainable consumption and production.” The meeting is expected to deliver a series of outcomes spelling out concrete actions to address key environmental challenges discussed at UNEA.

During UNEA’s high-level segment, themed “A Life of Dignity for All,” participants will address two issues: SDGs, including sustainable consumption and production (SCP); and the illegal trade in wildlife focusing on the escalation in poaching and surge in related environmental crime. UNEA will also convene two symposia addressing key aspects of environmental sustainability: the environmental rule of law; and the role of finance in the green economy.

A Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum preceded the meeting on 21-22 June 2014.

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF UNEP

As a result of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, the UN General Assembly (UNGA), in resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 1972, established UNEP as the central UN 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 included the promotion of international environmental cooperation and the recommendation of policies to achieve it, and the provision of policy guidance for the direction and coordination of environmental programmes in the UN system. The GC reported to the UN General Assembly, which had been responsible for electing its 58 members, taking into account the principle of equitable geographic representation. The Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF) was constituted by the GC as envisaged by General Assembly resolution 53/242 (1998). The purpose of the GMEF was to institute, at a high political level, a process for reviewing important and emerging policy issues in the field of the environment.

**GCSS7/GMEF:** This meeting was held from 13-15 February 2002, in Cartagena, Colombia. In its decision SS.VII/1, the GC/GMEF adopted recommendations aimed at strengthening international environmental governance (IEG), including through: improved coherence in international environmental policy-making; strengthening the role and financial situation of UNEP; improved coordination among, and effectiveness of,

multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs); and capacity building, technology transfer and country-level coordination. Delegates also adopted decisions related to, *inter alia*, the strategic approach to international chemicals management (SAICM).

**GC22/GMEF:** This meeting took place from 3-7 February 2003, in Nairobi, Kenya. Delegates adopted more than 40 decisions on issues relating to IEG, post-conflict environmental assessment, UNEP’s water policy and strategy, SAICM, a mercury programme, support to Africa, production and consumption patterns, and the environment and cultural diversity.

**GCSS8/GMEF:** This meeting 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 and decisions on: small island developing states (SIDS); waste management; water resource management; regional annexes; and the implementation of decision SS.VII/1 on IEG.

**GC23/GMEF:** This meeting took place from 21-25 February 2005, in Nairobi, Kenya. Ministers adopted decisions on, among other things: the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-Building; IEG; chemicals management; UNEP’s water policy and strategy; gender equality and the environment; poverty and the environment; and strengthening environmental emergency response and developing disaster prevention, preparedness, mitigation and early warning systems.

**GCSS9/GMEF:** This meeting was held from 7-9 February 2006, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Ministerial consultations addressed, *inter alia*: policy issues relating to energy and the environment, chemicals management, and tourism and the environment. The plenary discussions on environmental governance and universal membership of the GC did not produce an agreed outcome, and delegates decided that the report of the meeting should reflect the divergence of views expressed.

**GC24/GMEF:** This meeting convened from 5-9 February 2007, in Nairobi, Kenya. Delegates adopted 15 decisions on issues relating to, *inter alia*: chemicals, including a provision to establish the *Ad Hoc* Open-ended Working Group to Review and Assess Measures to Address the Global Issue of Mercury; the world environment situation; IEG; South-South cooperation; waste management; 2010-2020 UN Decade for Deserts and the Fight Against Desertification; UNEP’s updated water policy and strategy; and support to Africa for environmental management and protection.

**GCSS10/GMEF:** Convening in Monaco from 20-22 February 2008, ministerial consultations addressed the emerging policy issues of mobilizing finance to meet the climate challenge, and IEG and UN reform. The GC/GMEF adopted five decisions on: the UNEP Medium-term Strategy 2010-2013; chemicals

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management, including mercury and waste management; the Global Environment Outlook; sustainable development of the Arctic region; and the International Decade for Combating Climate Change.

**GC25/GMEF:** GC25/GMEF convened from 16-20 February 2009 in Nairobi, Kenya. The GC/GMEF adopted 17 decisions on issues relating to, *inter alia*: chemicals management, including mercury; the world environment situation; environmental law; and an Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform On Biodiversity And Ecosystem Services (IPBES). Decision 25/4 on IEG established a regionally representative, consultative group of ministers or high-level representatives to present a set of options for improving IEG.

**GCSS11/GMEF:** GCSS11/GMEF convened from 24-26 February 2010 in Bali, Indonesia, and adopted eight decisions on: IEG; enhanced coordination across the UN, including the Environment Management Group; a follow-up report on the environmental situation in Gaza; IPBES; strengthening the environmental response in Haiti; oceans; a consultative process on financing options for chemicals and wastes; and environmental law.

**GC26/GMEF:** This meeting took place from 21-24 February 2011 at the UN Office at Nairobi, Kenya. Seventeen decisions were adopted on issues relating to, *inter alia*: chemicals and waste management; the world environment situation; IEG; IPBES; South-South cooperation; and strengthening international cooperation for environmental crisis response.

**GCSS12/GMEF:** Convening from 20-22 February 2012, in Nairobi, Kenya, this meeting marked the 40th anniversary of the establishment of UNEP. Eight decisions were adopted, including on: "UNEP at 40;" IEG; the world environment situation; SCP; and the consultative process on financing options for chemicals and wastes.

**RIO+20:** The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), or Rio+20, convened in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 13-22 June 2012. With regard to UNEP, the outcome document, "The Future We Want," called for the UNGA to take decisions on, *inter alia*: designating a body to operationalize the 10-year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP on SCP), and strengthening and upgrading UNEP, including: universal membership in the GC; secure, stable, adequate and increased financial resources from the UN regular budget; enhanced ability to fulfill its coordination mandate within the UN system; promoting a strong science-policy interface; disseminating and sharing evidence-based environmental information and raising public awareness; providing capacity building to countries; consolidating headquarters functions in Nairobi and strengthening its regional presence; and ensuring the active participation of all relevant stakeholders.

**UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY:** On 21 December, 2012, the 67th session of the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 67/213 on strengthening and upgrading UNEP and establishing universal membership of its Governing Council. The resolution also calls for UNEP to receive secure, stable and increased financial resources from the UN regular budget and urges other UNEP donors to increase their voluntary funding. On 13 March 2013, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 67/251, which changed the designation of the UNEP GC to the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme.

**GC27/GMEF:** Convening from 19-22 February 2013, this meeting was the first Universal Session of the Governing Council. The GC adopted decisions on, *inter alia*: institutional arrangements, state of the environment; justice, governance and law for environmental sustainability; climate technology centre and network; UNEP's follow-up and implementation of UN summit outcomes; and budget and programme for work for the biennium 2014-2015.

## INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

### DIPLOMATIC CONFERENCE OF PLENIPOTENTIARIES ON THE MINAMATA CONVENTION ON MERCURY:

The Minamata Convention on Mercury was adopted on Thursday, 10 October 2013 in Kumamoto, Japan, following decades of increased awareness regarding the toxicity of mercury and mercury-related compounds. After four years of negotiations, the journey concluded with the adoption and signing of the Minamata Convention on Mercury by 91 countries and the EU.

**SECOND SESSION OF THE IPBES PLENARY:** IPBES-2 met from 9-14 December 2013 in Antalya, Turkey. Delegates adopted a set of decisions, known as "the Antalya Consensus," which include: the work programme for 2014-2018, including fast track, thematic, regional and subregional assessments and activities for building capacities; a conceptual framework that considers different knowledge systems; and rules and procedures for the Platform on, *inter alia*, the nomination of future Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP) members and procedures for the preparation of the Platform's deliverables. Anne Larigauderie was appointed as the first IPBES Executive Secretary.

### OPEN WORKING GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS:

During Rio+20, governments agreed to launch a process to develop a set of SDGs and in January 2013 the General Assembly established an Open Working Group (OWG) to elaborate a proposal for SDGs. The OWG has met 12 times since March 2013 at UN Headquarters in New York. During its first eight meetings (March 2013 - February 2014, the OWG conducted a "stocktaking" review on a series of issue clusters covering the three dimensions of sustainable development (environmental, economic and social development), as well as conflict prevention, post-conflict peacebuilding and the promotion of durable peace, rule of law and governance.

Based on these sessions, the Co-Chairs released a "stocktaking" document on 14 February 2014 and a "focus areas" document on 21 February 2014, containing 19 focus areas, which were the basis for discussions at OWG-9 (3-5 March 2014). The Co-Chairs released a revised focus areas document for consideration at OWG-10 (31 March-4 May 2014). OWG-10 featured the first extended discussion of possible targets to accompany each focus area, with over 300 targets presented by Member States and Major Groups. Based on the OWG-10 discussions, the Co-Chairs released a "working document" on 18 April, to guide delegates' preparations for OWG-11. At OWG-11 (5-9 May 2014), delegates commented on a new document containing a list of 16 "focus areas" and approximately 150 potential targets related to each focus area, which had been distributed by the Co-Chairs two weeks before the session. The Co-Chairs also prepared a document they titled "Encyclopedia Groupinica," which contains all of the proposals presented during OWG-10.

At OWG-12 (16-20 June 2014) and at a set of informal consultations the previous week, delegates had the opportunity to meet informally and discuss the "zero draft" of the proposed SDGs and targets, containing 17 goals and 212 targets. Delegates worked through the entire document goal-by-goal and target-by-target. The final meeting of the OWG will convene from 14-18 July 2014.

**OECPR:** The first meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (OECPR) to UNEP was held at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, from 24-28 March 2014. The OECPR considered: the half-yearly review of the implementation of the programme of work (POW) and budget for 2012-2013; policy matters, including its advice to UNEA; and the draft POW and budget for 2016-2017 and other administrative matters. The meeting provided an opportunity to: prepare for the UNEA sessions in 2014 and 2016; debate the role of UNEA in the UN system; and prepare draft decisions for adoption by UNEA. Delegates did not approve any decisions during the session.