



UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS TUESDAY, 4 FEBRUARY 2003

Delegates met in Plenary throughout the day, discussing policy issues, outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), and linkages among environment-related conventions, with a particular focus on chemicals, trade and water issues. The Committee of the Whole (COW) also met in morning and afternoon sessions to consider programmatic, administrative and budgetary matters, the state of the environment, emerging policy issues, and the role of civil society. A drafting committee convened to begin deliberations on various draft decisions, and contact groups met on the budget and chemicals.

PLENARY

WSSD OUTCOMES, POLICY ISSUES, AND LINKAGES: Governing Council President Ruhakana Rugunda indicated that the agenda items on WSSD outcomes, policy issues, and linkages among MEAs would be taken-up together. He asked delegates to focus first on chemicals-related outcomes from the WSSD and on trade and environment issues raised by the Doha Ministerial Declaration.

Chemicals and Trade Issues: Jim Willis, Director of UNEP's Chemicals Programme, reported on its work (UNEP/GC.22/10/Add.1) and highlighted the focus on issues emphasized at the WSSD. Drawing attention to the chemicals-related draft decisions before the Governing Council (UNEP/GC.22/L.1), he noted that some delegations – including the EU, Norway, Switzerland, and US – had submitted alternative texts.

Hussein Abaza, Chief of UNEP's Trade Programme, reflected on UNEP's work in this area and on key issues emerging from the WSSD and the fourth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, held at Doha in November 2001 (UNEP/GC.22/10/Add.2/Rev.1).

Many delegates congratulated UNEP's Chemicals Programme on its efficiency and the high standard of its work. SWITZERLAND, NEW ZEALAND, and CANADA supported giving the Programme a higher funding priority.

On the global mercury assessment, the EU and NORWAY supported a legally-binding instrument, while CANADA, COLOMBIA, the CZECH REPUBLIC, and MEXICO opposed this.

On trade issues, many Parties supported UNEP having observer status at relevant WTO meetings. The US, AUSTRALIA and others opposed a proposal that UNEP host bi-annual meetings of environment and trade ministers, while EGYPT felt the idea had some merit. The US said capacity building was the best entry point for UNEP's work on trade issues.

On the proposal for an Intergovernmental Panel on Global Environmental Change (IPEC), ETHIOPIA said it could improve efficiency, while JAPAN and MAURITIUS noted their objections to the idea.

Water Issues: In the afternoon, President Rugunda invited delegates to consider implementation of WSSD outcomes in relation to water policy and strategy (UNEP/GC.22/2/Add.3). UNEP Executive Director Klaus Töpfer drew attention to the Millennium

Development Goals, adding that 2003 has been declared the International Year of Freshwater, and that the third World Water Forum will be held in March. Delegates were then briefed by UNEP representatives Salif Diop and Veerle Vandeweerd on UNEP's response to the WSSD's outcomes relating to freshwater, water supply and sanitation, coastal zones and oceans, and small island developing states (SIDS).

In the subsequent discussion, many speakers highlighted the importance of commitments made at the WSSD on water issues. Reflecting on UNEP's water-related activities, MONGOLIA and others expressed support for UNEP's work, and the EU and NEW ZEALAND encouraged strengthening its freshwater efforts. SWITZERLAND, BELGIUM, and the EU endorsed an ecosystem approach, while TURKEY questioned its appropriateness for water management. CANADA supported strengthening implementation of the Global Environment Monitoring System's water quality programme.

On other water-related issues, the HOLY SEE said patterns of consumption among the wealthy should be reviewed, and the CZECH REPUBLIC highlighted the problem of flood prevention and control. TURKEY said UNEP's work on dams should be "more balanced" than that of the World Commission on Dams. SPAIN drew attention to the London Convention on Marine Pollution and VENEZUELA underscored the need to view water as a public good. The RAMSAR CONVENTION noted its development of guidelines for integrated coastal zone management and for water management in maintaining wetlands.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

WORK PROGRAMME AND ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS: Deputy Executive Director Shafqat Kakakhel presented the major elements of the proposed UNEP budget for 2004-2005 (UNEP/GC.22/6, UNEP/GC.22/6/Add.1 & UNEP/GC.22/7), noting a net increase of US\$41.6 million from the 2002-2003 budget. He outlined UNEP's proposed Programme of Work, highlighting seven key areas: assessment and early warning; environmental policy development and law; environmental policy implementation; technology, industry and economics; regional cooperation and representation; environmental conventions; and communications and public information (UNEP/GC.22/6).

In the ensuing discussions, Kakakhel agreed with delegates' comments on the need to focus on regional implementation. Replying to statements about the priority given by UNEP to WEHAB, he emphasized that WEHAB does not divert funds from UNEP's activities and agreed on the importance of managing its resources efficiently, noting the mechanisms in place to ensure efficiency.

POLICY ISSUES: State of the Environment: Kakakhel outlined policy issues relating to support to Africa, stating that WSSD decisions on regional implementation and the emergence of initiatives such as NEPAD have laid the foundation for UNEP to take greater steps in this area. He then reviewed policy issues concerning the global assessment of the state of the marine environment (UNEP/GC.22/2/Add.5). Referring to the relevant decision of the 21st Governing Council (UNEP/GC/21/13), which



launched UNEP's process of marine assessment, he explained that the current draft decision outlines UNEP's follow-up activities. He also reviewed the draft decision on post-conflict environmental assessments (UNEP/GC/22/2/Add.7).

In the ensuing discussion, SYRIA expressed concerns regarding the environmental situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. INDIA, PAKISTAN and INDONESIA questioned the appropriateness of discussions on the Asian Brown Cloud issue, and the US argued against UNEP playing a role in climate change and coral reef initiatives.

Emerging Policy Issues: Kakakhel then introduced draft decisions relating to: the implementation of the outcome of the Global Judges Symposium to promote capacity building among judiciaries; the application of Rio Principle 10 on access to information and legal redress; the legal dimension of sustainable patterns of production and consumption and environmentally and socially responsible behavior; and the status of environment-related conventions and protocols (UNEP/GC/22/3/Add.2).

Role of Civil Society: Kakakhel reviewed draft decisions regarding the engagement and involvement of youth in environmental issues (UNEP/GC/22/3/Add.1) and UNEP's strategy for sport and the environment (UNEP/GC/22/3/Add.3). He also presented UNEP's policy responses on: enhancing civil society engagement in the work of UNEP; strengthening the engagement of business and industry; and UNEP's participation in the work of the GEF. The US, supported by others, urged that no action be taken on civil society's role until the UN Secretary-General's report is completed, and argued that guidelines on civil society participation be based on those used by ECOSOC. Several delegations acknowledged the role of the private sector and the need for partnerships to achieve sustainable development.

Kakakhel also reviewed documentation on UNEP's cooperation with UN-HABITAT and a draft decision on environmental emergency prevention, preparedness, assessment, response and mitigation (UNEP/GC/22/3).

DRAFTING COMMITTEE

On Tuesday morning, Chair Juergen Weerth opened the Drafting Committee's first session, and introduced draft decisions submitted by the CPR (UNEP/GC.22/L.1). The Committee approved decisions addressing the restructured GEF and the revision of financial rules of the Environment Fund, while a draft decision on the loan from the Environment Fund financial reserve was finalized with minor changes. Draft decisions on long-term strategies for the involvement of young people in environmental issues and for sport and the environment were supported following the inclusion of several minor amendments.

The draft decision on the management of trust funds was approved with the incorporation of a request that the Executive Director propose to the Governing Council at its 23rd session that it reduce the number of trust funds, in order to improve UNEP's efficiency. The draft decision on sustainable development of the Arctic was also approved.

Regarding the draft decision on the World Conservation Monitoring Center (WCMC), a developed country, supported by some developing countries, expressed concern that expanding the Center's mandate to include policy development would conflict with its current role as a non-biased body. Consideration of the draft was deferred.

Draft decisions on post-conflict environmental assessments and on environment and cultural diversity provoked protracted debate, with both decisions remaining unresolved.

The draft decision on the follow-up to the General Assembly Resolution 57/251 on the Report of GCSS-7 revealed strongly held opposing positions, in particular on the process of consultation on universal membership of the Council, the indicative scale of contributions to the Environment Fund and funding from the UN regular budget. The text underwent heavy editing and will be taken up again.

BUDGET CONTACT GROUP

Contact Group Chair John Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda) invited questions on the Executive Director's report on the Environment Fund budgets and the proposed biennial programme and support budget for 2004-2005 (UNEP/GC.22/6). Replying to several developed countries, a UNON representative clarified issues pertaining to: the expected income of UNEP in 2004-2005; the authority of the Executive Director to reallocate resources between programmes; the financial reserve; and the carry-over of resources. Several delegates raised concerns that decisions from parallel meetings would impact on budgetary matters.

On the thematic focus of UNEP's Programme of Work, a developed country proposed numerous deletions relating to UNEP's role in promoting MEA ratification, trade and environment, access and benefit sharing regimes in relation to biodiversity, and the policy integration of the WEHAB agenda, arguing that the proposals were outside UNEP's mandate.

CHEMICALS CONTACT GROUP

In the Chemicals Contact Group, chaired by Halldor Thor-geirsson (Iceland), developed countries emphasized the need for openness and transparency in the strategic approach to international chemicals management, suggesting that key recommendations be drawn from GCSS-7/GMEF-3 and the WSSD outcomes, the Bahia Declaration, and the Steering Committee on the Strategic Approach. Delegates stressed the need for clarity and avoiding duplication of other work in formulating a mercury programme.

IN THE CORRIDORS

According to observers, some delegates "began playing hardball" on Tuesday. As substantive negotiations started in the Drafting Committee, participants noticed strong positions emerging as delegates reopened debates on several draft decisions previously approved by the Committee of Permanent Representatives. While at least one diplomat felt the Council may have "bitten off more than it can chew" with its heavy agenda, others were not so sure, noting that at least positions were now becoming clear on potentially thorny issues such as the environment and cultural diversity, and the indicative scale of contributions. Several added that the tough positions taken by negotiators on Tuesday were probably due to an unwillingness to give too much away prior to the arrival of their ministers on Wednesday. They predicted that the situation could well become more settled and "consensus-friendly" as the week progresses.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

MINISTERIAL CONSULTATIONS: The high-level ministerial segment of the meeting begins at 9:00 am in Conference Room 2. The segment will consist of consultations on the implementation of the WSSD's outcomes. In the morning, discussions will focus on sustainable production and consumption, while in the afternoon talks are expected to turn to environment-poverty linkages and UNEP's contribution to the WSSD's biodiversity-related commitments.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE: The COW will convene at 3:00 pm in Conference Room 2. It is expected to resume its consideration of policy issues and the role of civil society.

DRAFTING COMMITTEE: The drafting group is expected to convene at 10:00 am in Room R310 to continue its work on the remaining draft decisions.

CONTACT GROUP ON THE BUDGET: The contact group will reconvene at 11:00 am in Conference Room 7 to begin negotiating the draft decision on the Environment Fund budgets, the proposed biennial programme, and the support budget for 2004-2005. Extensive discussions are expected on the programme's thematic focus and the subprogramme narratives.

CONTACT GROUP ON CHEMICALS: Delegates will convene at 10:00 am in Room C224, and are expected to consider the global mercury assessment, plans for immediate action at the national level, directions to UNEP on how to proceed, and international initiatives.