



EIGHTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME'S GOVERNING COUNCIL/GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM: 29-31 MARCH 2004

The eighth Special Session of the United Nations Environment Programme's Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum opens today at the International Convention Centre in Jeju, Republic of Korea. Ministers and delegates will be considering issues regarding: assessment, monitoring and early warning; outcomes of intergovernmental meetings of relevance to the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum; and international environmental governance, in particular the implementation of decisions of the seventh Special Session of the Governing Council/Global Environment Ministerial Forum and the World Summit on Sustainable Development on the report of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Ministers or Their Representatives on International Environmental Governance. In parallel, high-level ministerial consultations will convene to discuss the theme "Environmental dimensions of water, sanitation and human settlements," together with several cross-cutting issues, which will contribute to the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development at its twelfth session in April 2004.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL/GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM

As a result of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, UN General Assembly Resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 1972 officially established the UN Environment Programme (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 recommending 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 GC was called on to continue its role with regard to policy guidance and coordination taking into account a development perspective.

The Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF) is constituted by the UNEP Governing Council as envisaged in UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution 53/242. The purpose of the GMEF was 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. The UNGA resolution also determined that the GC would constitute the GMEF in the years that it meets in regular session and, in alternate years, with the GMEF taking the form of a Special Session of the GC.

19TH 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, 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 (UNGASS-19) for the review of the implementation of Agenda 21.

20TH GOVERNING COUNCIL: The 20th session of the Governing Council took place in Nairobi, from 1-5 February 1999, and marked the first meeting of the Council since UNGASS-19, the adoption of the Nairobi Declaration, and 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/GMEF: The sixth Special Session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GCSS-6/GMEF) took place in Malmö, Sweden, from 29-31 May 2000. Environment ministers adopted the Malmö Ministerial Declaration, which agreed that the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) 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 in Nairobi, from 5-9 February 2001. A high-level ministerial dialogue discussed implementation of the Nairobi Declaration and the Malmö Ministerial Declaration.

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INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE PROCESS:

The 21st session of the GC 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 the seventh Special Session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GCSS-7/GMEF).

SEVENTH SPECIAL SESSION/GMEF: GCSS-7/GMEF was held in Cartagena, Colombia, from 13-15 February 2002. Delegates adopted the IGM report on IEG, which noted 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 environmental 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 further the coordination and institutional requirements for international environmental policy in view of the outcome of the WSSD and in light of the Malmö Declaration.

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 MEAs; development of a strategy for the active engagement of civil society, the private sector and major groups in the work of UNEP; 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 in Nairobi, from 3-7 February 2003. GC-22/GMEF concluded its work by adopting more than 40 decisions on issues relating to IEG, post-conflict environmental assessment, 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.

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

SAICM: The first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the development of a Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), took place in Bangkok, Thailand, from 9-13 November 2003. The Committee adopted a report, which contains *inter alia*, issues to be addressed during the development of the SAICM and items to be forwarded to the second meeting of the Preparatory Committee.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONSULTATION ON

STRENGTHENING THE SCIENTIFIC BASE OF UNEP: The intergovernmental consultation on strengthening the scientific base of UNEP (IGC) was held in Nairobi, from 14-15 January 2004. The two-day meeting was part of UNEP's implementation of decisions taken at GC-22/GMEF, in particular, decision 22/1IA on strengthening the scientific base of UNEP. The IGC considered three questions posed in decision 22/1IA, namely: (1) what are the likely gaps and types of assessment needs with respect to the environment and environmental change; (2) how are UNEP and other organizations currently meeting those assessment needs; and (3) what options exist with respect to meeting any unfulfilled needs that fall within the role and mandate of UNEP. The IGC also considered several cross-cutting issues regarding scientific credibility, salience, legitimacy and relevance in the assessment processes; interaction between science and policy development; the role of existing institutions; possible options including strengthening existing institutions and mechanisms and the establishment of an intergovernmental panel on global environmental change; links and sectoral integration; duplication, cooperation, complementarity and added value to the work of other assessment processes, international agencies and MEAs; cost-effectiveness and efficiency; and developing country participation and capacity building. The IGC adopted several conclusions and recommendations that provided input for the Executive Directors report to GCSS-8/GMEF.

GCSS-8/GMEF PARALLEL MEETINGS: Prior to GCSS-8/GMEF several parallel meetings were convened to prepare inputs to the meetings and to continue discussions on the implementation of relevant GC decisions. Among these, UNEP convened the first meeting of the UNEP Network of Institutions for Sustainable Development (26 March), Capacity Building for Integrated Policy Design and Implementation for Sustainable Development: Developing Mutually Supportive Trade and Environment Policies (27-28 March); and the Fifth Global Civil Society Forum (27-28 March). The outcomes of these meetings will be presented during the plenary discussion of GCSS-8/GMEF.

Delegates also met in regional groups on 28 March to discuss their input and positions for GCSS-8/GMEF session.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

OPENING PLENARY: Plenary will convene at 10:00 am to hear welcoming and introductory remarks from the Acting President of the Governing Council, a message from UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, and remarks by UNEP Executive Director Klaus Töpfer, and the Acting President and the Minister of Environment of the Republic of Korea. Following this, delegates will address organizational matters including the election of the GC President and the adoption of the agenda.

MINISTERIAL CONSULTATIONS: Ministerial consultations will take place from 12:00-1:00 pm and from 3:00-7:00 pm in Halla Hall, to address the follow-up to the WSSD: contribution of UNEP to the forthcoming session of the Commission on Sustainable Development under the theme "Environmental dimension of water, sanitation and human settlements."

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE: The Committee of the Whole will meet from 12:00-1:00 pm and from 3:00-6:00 pm in Tamna Hall, to address: assessment, monitoring and early warning; state of the environment; outcomes of intergovernmental meetings of relevance to the GC/GMEF; and international environmental governance regarding the implementation of decisions of the GCSS-7/GMEF and of the WSSD on the report of the IGM.