



GCSS-8/GMEF HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 29 MARCH 2004

The eighth Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GCSS-8/GMEF) opened on Monday, 29 March, at the International Convention Center in Jeju, Republic of Korea. Delegates met in a morning Plenary to hear opening statements and address organizational matters. In the afternoon, delegates met in parallel sessions of the GC/GMEF: ministerial consultations focused on the theme "environmental dimension of water, sanitation and human settlements;" and the Committee of the Whole (COW) deliberated issues regarding international environmental governance (IEG), the strategic plan on technology support and capacity building, strengthening the scientific base of UNEP, the Environment Management Group (EMG), and multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).

PLENARY

Kyul-Ho Kwak, Minister of Environment of the Republic of Korea, said the WSSD was an important turning point in the establishment of goals and plans for global environmental protection in the 21st century. Anna Tibaijuka, Executive Director of UN-HABITAT, delivered a message from the UN Secretary-General stressing the importance of further developing IEG, in particular addressing universal membership of the GC, strengthening the scientific base of UNEP, and the intergovernmental strategic plan for technology support and capacity building. UNEP Executive Director Klaus Töpfer highlighted the need to refocus attention on the foundation of sustainable development, which he said was the only security policy for the future.

Gun Goh, Acting President of the Republic of Korea, highlighted the importance of international cooperation in addressing environmental issues. Ryutaro Hashimoto, former Prime Minister of Japan, expressed hope that countries can learn from Japan's prior experiences and that mistakes will not be repeated. Anna Tubaijuka, UN-HABITAT, stressed the need for an effective mechanism to target the poor and ensure the active involvement of local communities in addressing issues regarding human settlement. Børge Brende, Minister of Environment of Norway and Chair of CSD-12, reported on progress made in meeting the MDG and WSSD targets related to water, sanitation and human settlements. He emphasized the importance of UNEP's leadership and the relevance of CSD-12 in maintaining the political momentum for the implementation of water and sanitation targets. Pakistan for the G-77/CHINA, highlighted the role of technology support and capacity building as central aspects of IEG. Amos Masondo, Mayor of Johannesburg, stressed the importance of working with local governments to ensure sustainable communities. Hak-Su

Kim, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), highlighted ESCAP's regional water programmes and underscored collaboration with UNEP. Annik Dollacker, International Chamber of Commerce, noted that the business sector is an important source of technologies and management systems to support sustainable development.

Camila Gidinho, Youth Representative to UNEP, called for the support of projects and programmes involving youths. She highlighted the cooperation between the business sector, youths and all citizens and asked that authorities empower marginalized groups.

Organizational matters: Suk Jo Lee, Acting GC President (Republic of Korea), presented the provisional agenda (UNEP/GCSS.VIII/1/Add.1), which was adopted without amendments. Regarding the election of the GC President, Nigeria, for the AFRICAN GROUP, nominated Arcado Ntagazwa, Minister of State in charge of the Environment, as the new African representative in the Bureau. Minister Ntagazwa was then elected as the new GC President by acclamation. Tania Van Gool (Netherlands) was elected as Chair of the COW.

In response to the circulation of a proposal by the Bureau, containing elements for a draft decision on implementation of decision SS.VII/1 on IEG (UNEP/GCSS/VIII/CW/CRP.2), the US said it had difficulty with the draft decision being circulated with insufficient notice. UNEP Deputy Executive Director Shafqat Kakakhel explained that the draft was prepared by the Secretariat in response to wishes expressed in the Committee of Permanent Representatives, and said the draft decision was of a procedural nature. He stressed that the draft had been submitted to the session with a view that substantive decisions will be adopted by the upcoming UN General Assembly. He referred to informal requests to the Secretariat from governments to preclude the tabling of several drafts in favor of an omnibus decision. GC President Ntagazwa confirmed his understanding that the draft was procedural, and registered no objection to it being taken up.

MINISTERIAL CONSULTATIONS: The ministerial consultations addressed the theme "environmental dimension of water, sanitation and human settlements," as part of UNEP's follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development and its contribution to CSD-12. Delegates deliberated issues regarding integrated water resource management (IWRM), governance, institutions, finance, capacity building, and practical actions to be taken.

The ministerial consultations heard 56 speakers representing 47 countries. Delegates shared country experiences relating to water and sanitation management and showcased national and regional examples of good water management initiatives. Interventions addressed issues including the: active participation of



national and regional governments, women, business and civil society in addressing water and sanitation management; management of watersheds; partnerships within and between countries; need for capacity building and training in IWRM; technical and financial issues of IWRM; need to build institutions; and need for environmental impact assessments. The moderator noted that the interventions reflected the view that water is a public good and a common resource, but that it needs to be managed in an efficient and business-like way to ensure full-cost recovery.

Following the interventions by representatives, Børge Brende, Minister of Environment of Norway and Chair of CSD-12, underscored the need to place IWRM strategies on the national level agenda of all countries, and for them to regard IWRM as a priority expenditure area. He stressed that IWRM plans should be prepared and owned by governments, include all stakeholders, especially women, and that water should be integrated into national development strategies.

Klaus Töpfer, UNEP, closed the ministerial consultations emphasizing MDG-7, which addresses the need to ensure environmental sustainability. He noted that reaching the target would be difficult, but that IWRM provides a good backing for this work, and underscored the importance of practical examples provided by country representatives.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair Tania Van Gool informed the Committee that an open-ended drafting group will be established to prepare draft decisions to be submitted to the Plenary, and invited each regional group to nominate three representatives to the drafting group. Chair Van Gool then presented three agenda items for the COW's discussion: assessment, monitoring and early warning; outcomes of intergovernmental meetings of relevance to the GC/GMEF; and IEG. Shafqat Kakakhel, UNEP, and other members of the Secretariat introduced the relevant documents for discussion.

All speakers expressed support to the IEG process and to strengthening UNEP in this context.

On universal membership of the GC, the EU supported the idea, while suggesting the establishment of an executive board for decision making within an expanded GC. SWITZERLAND argued that universal membership is indispensable for UNEP. CANADA, with MEXICO and NEW ZEALAND, also supported universal membership. The US stressed universal participation rather than universal membership, noting that GC decisions are taken by consensus. Pakistan for the G-77/CHINA, noted that there was no consensus on the membership issue. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA, with KENYA, EGYPT, KENYA and CHINA, called for a cautious approach in addressing the issue. JAPAN argued against universal membership, and The RUSSIAN FEDERATION warned against its hasty introduction, which could hamper the work of the GC.

On the Secretariat's proposals for the strategic plan on technology support and capacity building, the G-77/CHINA, SWITZERLAND, The RUSSIAN FEDERATION, NIGERIA, and KENYA, supported the proposals, with NORWAY suggesting the development of an action plan for implementing the future strategy. The EU said that UNEP should collaborate with GEF and UNDP regarding national and regional needs. CANADA supported the strategic plan and stressed the need for UNEP to cooperate with GEF and UNDP, while avoiding duplication and overlap of work. AUSTRALIA stated that the plan should be cost-effective. MEXICO emphasized that the strategic plan should have clear indicators that are linked to budget and long-term realistic results. OMAN underscored the need for international data and informa-

tion dissemination. EGYPT, CHINA, INDONESIA and others supported the establishment of an open-ended working group on this issue.

Many speakers welcomed efforts to strengthen UNEP's financial base. The G-77/CHINA stressed the need for more contributions from developed countries, noting that the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities should be complied with, and that a new mechanism should not place an additional burden on developing countries. SWITZERLAND called for the adoption of the voluntary indicative scale of contributions to the Environment Fund, while JAPAN, supported by the US, said it decided not to utilize the scale. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION stressed the voluntary nature of contributions and called for mobilizing other sources. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA said it has doubled its pledge to the Environment Fund.

With regard to strengthening the scientific base of UNEP, the EU said there is a need to further explore the use of existing bodies, and stressed the importance of following up on the outcomes of the Intergovernmental Consultation. AUSTRALIA said the key issue is to seek more resources rather than to create new bodies. CANADA highlighted access to information and monitoring capacity as areas that need to be strengthened. The US urged UNEP to increase cooperation with academic societies. CUBA said duplication and overlap of work should be avoided. In order to avoid duplication, NEW ZEALAND urged UNEP to link its work with other relevant agencies.

On MEAs, the EU suggested a series of training sessions to support implementation and compliance of MEAs. The US said interlinkages among MEAs should be decided by MEA Secretariats. CHINA said that linkages among MEAs should not reduce support to the implementation work of developing countries.

Regarding the EMG, the US said that coordination among UN bodies should constitute the core activities for the EMG. CHINA said the EMG should report on its work to CSD, UNEP and MEAs. KENYA proposed that the EMG be based in Nairobi.

IN THE CORRIDORS

The election of the new President of the UNEP Governing Council concluded without major incident. The flexible interpretation of the rules of procedure provided by the UN legal office was sufficient enough to quell the concerns of several JUSCANZ countries, who, after an internal meeting late on Sunday, agreed not to oppose this precedent-setting procedural decision. With the ministerial consultations underway, several delegates observed the significant overlap with the upcoming CSD session, leading some to suggest that this component of the GCSS is leaning more towards being a mini-CSD preparatory meeting than a ministerial session of the GC/GMEF.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

MINISTERIAL CONSULTATIONS: Ministerial consultations will continue in Halla Hall from 9:00 am-1:00 pm and from 3:00-7:00 pm to discuss the theme "environmental dimension of water, sanitation and human settlements."

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE: The COW will meet from 10:00 am-1:00 pm and from 3:00-6:00 pm in Tamna Hall, to address: assessment, monitoring and early warning: state of the environment and outcomes of intergovernmental meetings of relevance to the GC/GMEF.

DRAFTING GROUP: An open-ended drafting group will meet from 10:00 am throughout the day to deliberate on the draft omnibus decision on IEG.