



UNEP WORKING GROUP ON AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL STRATEGIC PLAN FOR TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING: FRIDAY, 25 JUNE 2004

The first session of the United Nations Environment Programme's High-level Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on an Intergovernmental Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building took place at UN headquarters in New York on Friday, 25 June 2004. The aim of the session was to reach agreement on how the Working Group would proceed, and to engage in an initial exchange of views as input for the preparation of a draft intergovernmental strategic plan for technology support and capacity building. The meeting was attended by over 100 delegates representing governments, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, UN agencies and programmes, and other relevant stakeholders.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF UNEP'S ROLE AND MANDATE ON TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

In recent years, technology support and capacity building have become a key part of the quest for sustainable development. Issues encompassing human, scientific, technological, organizational, institutional and resource capabilities are core components of the mandate of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), and feature prominently in both Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. Capacity building, in particular, has become an explicit priority for the UN system.

UNCED: In 1992, the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) reaffirmed UNEP's mandate as the lead environment programme within the UN system. UNCED also adopted Agenda 21, the action plan for implementing sustainable development. Chapter 34 of Agenda 21 deals with the transfer of environmentally-sound technologies to developing countries. The chapter also identifies activities relating to capacity building and cooperative arrangements and partnerships aimed at promoting sustainable development. Meanwhile, Chapter 37 recognizes that a fundamental goal of capacity building is to enhance the ability of

developing countries to evaluate and address policy choices and modes of implementation. Chapter 38, which deals with international institutional arrangements, identifies several priority areas for UNEP, including: facilitating information exchange on environmentally-sound technologies; providing technical, legal and institutional advice to governments that are establishing and enhancing their national legal and institutional frameworks; and supporting governments and development agencies and organs in integrating environmental considerations into their development policies and programmes.

53RD SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY: At its 53rd session in 1999, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution A/RES/53/242 on the *Report of the Secretary-General on Environment and Human Settlements*. The resolution stressed that capacity building and technical assistance remain important components of UNEP's work programmes, particularly in terms of institutional strengthening in developing countries and research and scientific studies in the field of environment and human settlements.

SIXTH SPECIAL SESSION OF UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL: The sixth Special Session of UNEP's Governing Council and the Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GCSS-6/GMEF) took place in Malmö, Sweden, from 29-31 May 2000. Ministers adopted the Malmö Ministerial Declaration, which called on the upcoming World Summit on Sustainable Develop-

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ment (WSSD) to review the requirements for a greatly strengthened institutional structure for international environmental governance.

This issue of governance was subsequently taken up at the 21st regular session of the UNEP Governing Council in February 2001. The Council established an Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Ministers or Their Representatives to undertake a comprehensive policy-oriented assessment of existing institutional weaknesses, as well as future needs and options for strengthening international environmental governance. The Group of Ministers met five times, and reported on its work to the UNEP Governing Council in 2002.

SEVENTH SPECIAL SESSION: The report on governance was presented during the seventh Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council and Global Ministerial Environment Forum, which was held in Cartagena, Colombia, from 13-15 February 2002. Delegates adopted decision SS/VII/1, which contained an annex with the report of the Intergovernmental Group of Ministers. The decision underscored the need for UNEP to play a more prominent role in supporting country-level capacity building and training and national-level coordination of the environmental component of sustainable development. The decision also recommended that UNEP help strengthen regional environmental governance and improve coordination, implementation, capacity building and technology transfer in support of regional initiatives. It also recognized the need to strengthen the ability of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to participate fully in the development of international environmental policy, including support for countries to undertake the requisite implementation of international agreements at the national level. In terms of technology support, the Governing Council's decision highlighted the need to establish and facilitate arrangements for the transfer of environmentally-sound technologies to developing countries. The decision also noted that UNEP, in cooperation with relevant regional and subregional organizations, could help strengthen regional environmental governance to improve coordination, implementation, capacity building and technology transfer.

The Governing Council recommended that an intergovernmental strategic plan on technology support and capacity building be developed to improve the effectiveness of capacity building, and to address the gaps identified by assessments of existing activities and needs. The Council agreed that an intergovernmental strategic plan could be implemented through enhanced coordination between UNEP and other relevant bodies, including the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and that should it include an increased role for UNEP in country-level capacity delivery, particularly through greater collaboration with UNDP. The Council decided that the plan should be built on two components: capacity building and training, and the national-level coordination of the environmental component of sustainable development.

Regarding capacity building and training, the Governing Council recommended strengthening national institutions responsible for the environment and the implementation of multilateral

environmental agreements. On national-level coordination of the environmental component of sustainable development, the decision underscored the need for developing countries to have access to financial, technological and technical resources from the international community.

WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: The World Summit on Sustainable Development convened from 26 August to 4 September 2002, in Johannesburg, South Africa. The Summit adopted two main documents: the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. Both documents address issues of technology support and capacity building. Paragraph 137 of the Plan of Implementation states that UNEP and other UN agencies should strengthen their contribution to sustainable development programmes and the implementation of Agenda 21 at all levels, particularly in the area of promoting capacity building.

22ND SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL: The 22nd session of the UNEP Governing Council and Global Ministerial Environment Forum took place from 3-7 February 2003, in Nairobi, Kenya. The Council/Forum adopted decision GC.22/17/I, which requests UNEP's Executive Director, in consultation with UNDP and the GEF, to prepare a draft strategic plan for presentation to the eighth Special Session of the Governing Council.

EIGHTH SPECIAL SESSION: The eighth Special Session of UNEP's Governing Council and Global Ministerial Environment Forum took place from 29-31 March 2004, in Jeju, Republic of Korea. Delegates considered the elements for a draft intergovernmental strategic plan on technology support and capacity building set out in a report of the Executive Director (UNEP/GCSS.VIII/5/Add.1). The Council adopted decision SS./VIII/1, which underscored the need to provide developing countries and countries with economies in transition with assistance for implementing their environmental goals, targets and objectives, particularly those set out in the JPOI. The decision also highlighted the urgent need to develop a strategic plan.

The Governing Council established a High-level Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group with the mandate to prepare an intergovernmental strategic plan for technology support and capacity building for consideration at the 23rd regular session of the Council in early 2005. The decision emphasized the need to receive inputs from relevant organizations and stakeholders, in particular the GEF and UNDP, as well as international financial organizations, UN agencies and the secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements. The Working Group was scheduled to meet three times to finalize its report: in June 2004 in New York; in September in Nairobi, Kenya; and in December in Indonesia.

UNEP PREPARATORY MEETINGS: Since the adoption of the decision in Jeju, several meetings were held in advance of the first Intergovernmental Working Group session. UNEP's Nairobi-based Committee of Permanent Representatives established a group to provide inputs to the Intergovernmental Working Group, which met several times to discuss the matter. The UN Environmental Management Group met in New York on 20 April 2004, and decided that the work it had already embarked on through an issue



management group on UN capacity building and technology support in the fields of biodiversity and chemicals would be provided as input to the Intergovernmental Working Group.

REPORT OF THE SESSION

On Friday morning, 25 June, UNEP Governing Council President Arcadio Ntagazwa (Tanzania) opened the first session of the High-level Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on an Intergovernmental Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building. President Ntagazwa explained that he would be chairing the Working Group. He began by providing background information on how the Working Group had come into being, highlighting UNEP Governing Council decision SS.VII/1, adopted in Cartagena, Colombia, on 15 February 2002. President Ntagazwa drew attention in particular to paragraph 34 of the appendix to this decision, which stressed the need for an intergovernmental strategic plan for technology support and capacity building. He added that this issue had subsequently been taken up in various forums, including at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, and at the UNEP Governing Council's eighth Special Session held in Jeju, Republic of Korea, in late March 2004. The Governing Council had adopted a decision (SS.VIII/1) emphasizing the urgent need to prepare a strategic plan on technology support and capacity building to assist developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

The Working Group then adopted the provisional agenda for the session (UNEP/IEG/IGSP/1/1). Delegates agreed on the organization of work, which President Ntagazwa said would begin with a presentation from UNEP Executive Director Klaus Töpfer, followed by briefings on recent relevant meetings, and comments and input from delegates. He explained that the suggestions received today and at other meetings would feed into proposals for consideration at the Working Group's next session in September. He also noted that two facilitators would assist the discussions and negotiations at future sessions: Idunn Eidheim (Norway) and Bagher Asadi (Iran).

PREPARATION OF A DRAFT INTERGOVERNMENTAL STRATEGIC PLAN FOR TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

UNEP Executive Director Klaus Töpfer introduced the main item on the agenda, outlining the background to this process, and drawing attention to relevant documentation prepared by UNEP (UNEP/IEG/IGSP/1/INF/1-6). He welcomed the input provided during several relevant meetings held in recent weeks, and expressed hope that this process would enable UNEP to improve its work. He outlined UNEP's current involvement in capacity building and technology support, including its focus on poverty eradication and on regional and subregional activities. He also stressed the value of South-South cooperation, the unique needs of different countries and groups of countries, and the importance of taking a multidisciplinary approach.

BRIEFINGS ON RECENT MEETINGS: Delegates were then briefed on discussions held in the UNEP Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) working group, which convened in

Nairobi on 5 May, 16 May and 2 June 2004. CPR Rapporteur Andrew Kiptoon (Kenya) noted that the Committee had identified various issues that needed to be addressed, including cooperation between UNEP, UNDP and the GEF, as well as accounting for the UN Common Country Assessments and UN Development Assistance Framework. He advocated that the draft strategic plan should be complementary to existing UN activities and structures, adding that, while UNEP should take the lead in devising the plan, cooperation with UNDP and the GEF in the development and implementation phase would be crucial.

Philippe LePrestre, University of Quebec at Montreal, presented the outcomes of a meeting of experts held from 17-18 June 2004, in Geneva, underscoring participants' comments on the need to identify the principles and implications of the strategic plan. He highlighted comments on the importance of addressing potential synergies with multilateral environmental agreements in order to define the concepts of technology support and capacity building clearly. He also drew attention to statements on the need to base recommendations on available research and international environmental governance.

Georgina Ayre, Stakeholder Forum For Our Common Future, summarized key recommendations emerging from civil society consultations held in Nairobi from 21-22 June 2004, highlighting that the strategic plan should: incorporate guiding principles for the development and implementation of capacity building and technology support initiatives; adopt a "beneficiaries' perspective" to ensure that efforts are demand-driven; and address the costing and allocation of financial, human and institutional resources.

PROPOSALS FROM GOVERNMENTS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS: Governments and other stakeholders then provided their input and suggestions for consideration in preparing the draft intergovernmental strategic plan. A number of speakers said the strategic plan should be action-oriented, take a long-term strategic approach, and be consistent with the Millennium Development Goals and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

Pakistan, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China (G-77/China), recommended working within existing UN structures to minimize the duplication of efforts. He said a follow-up process to monitor the implementation of the strategic plan at the intergovernmental level was vital.

Ireland, on behalf of the European Union (EU), highlighted the importance of developing the strategic plan in time for the next UNEP Governing Council session in February 2005. Outlining key challenges that the plan should address, she noted inadequate institutional capacity, lack of transparency and accountability, and the absence of meaningful data and monitoring and reporting systems. She proposed that the plan should include:

- an assessment of gaps and needs in ongoing activities;
- a definition of the objectives and functions of a strategic plan;
- clear objectives and benchmarks, and concrete proposals and policies;
- inter-agency cooperation and steps to avoid duplication of work; and
- financial provisions.



Nigeria highlighted the timeliness of this process, and suggested that South-South cooperation should be a key component in the strategic plan. He highlighted the important role played by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and also urged that funding for the strategic plan be predictable and ongoing, and involve new and additional resources.

Switzerland said the elements for the strategic plan proposed by UNEP should serve as the basis for discussions. He recommended that the strategic plan address the division of labor between UNEP, UNDP, the GEF, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and other relevant organizations. Duplication of work should be avoided, and the roles of regional and country offices clarified.

UNDP drew attention to its 65-page submission for this process. He outlined UNDP's relevant work on capacity building and technology support, noting that UNDP had invested over US\$1 billion in specific capacity development programmes and activities in over 130 countries during the last decade. He also highlighted a draft Memorandum of Understanding with UNEP, which he hoped would be signed shortly.

Mexico stressed the need for a flexible and country-based approach to technology support and capacity building. He said the financial and budgetary implications of the plan should be made clear, as guaranteed and ongoing financing is essential. He also stated that the plan should contain clear policy recommendations, be consistent with the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and have a regional component.

The Russian Federation supported strengthening UNEP's role in capacity-building activities and proposed that the strategic plan should cover target-based endeavors in the short, medium and long term, identify organizations responsible for implementation, and state clearly what financial resources are required. He underscored the importance of identifying synergies between UN agencies in the strategic plan.

New Zealand supported a country-driven, bottom-up approach to capacity building, as well as ensuring a focus on and complementarity with regional activities already underway.

Norway endorsed a systematic, demand-driven approach to capacity-building activities, and advocated making use of existing resources and the comparative advantages of various actors. She also proposed that the adopted strategy be presented to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

South Africa said the plan should aim at strengthening national institutions, providing training and policy frameworks, as well as monitoring trends.

Australia advocated that capacity building activities be country-owned and cost effective, and emphasized the need to define the terms used, especially what is meant by technology support.

Outlining activities undertaken by the regional initiatives in Latin America and the Caribbean, Panama highlighted the importance of taking into account each region's specific needs and the mandates adopted by regional organizations.

Indonesia emphasized that the increasing volume of international commitments and targets facing developing countries requires a strategic plan to be promptly formulated and agreed upon. He outlined the challenges confronting developing countries, including a lack of skills and tools for environmental management and insufficient technological resources, and suggested that responses to these challenges be based on lessons learned and on adopting demand-driven principles.

Canada recommended a focus on responding to the needs of developing countries. She underlined that defining the mandate and role of UNEP, as well as addressing financing and implementation, is vital. The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) suggested taking account of the General Assembly's upcoming discussion on the Secretary-General's comprehensive review of the UN Secretariat. He welcomed the establishment of an integrated strategic approach to capacity building, and highlighted the need to examine capacity building at all levels and broaden the scope to include a system perspective.

China stressed the need for the plan to address developing countries' unique situations and concerns, and to be feasible in terms of the resources required.

Samoa highlighted the needs of small island developing states (SIDS) for adequate resources and support from the international community. He said the strategic plan should be action-oriented, take a long-term strategic approach, and "produce results that will better the lives of our peoples."

The US requested information on what all relevant UN bodies are doing in terms of technology support and capacity building, as well as actions by business, academia, NGOs, and other stakeholders. He recommended that the plan should focus on areas where UNEP offers a comparative advantage, expertise and a relevant existing programme. He suggested that the plan should promote transparency, and avoid creating additional layers of bureaucracy. He also argued that it should promote UNEP's involvement in partnerships with other stakeholders.

Argentina highlighted the need for the strategic plan to be action-oriented, and stressed that capacity building should meet local needs.

Iran emphasized that the plan should only relate to UNEP, although it should take into account the work of other agencies.

India urged an examination of existing UNEP activities. He said the strategic plan should seek to strengthen existing programmes where possible, introducing new initiatives where these are demanded by the priorities agreed in the plan. He noted the need to establish an appropriate coordinating mechanism among UNEP and other relevant organizations.

Colombia reflected on regional experiences in the building of networks of experts by universities, and also highlighted the issue of corporate accountability, which he said should be explored in more detail.

Peru stressed the importance of South-South relationships, and said the Working Group's next session should involve a more interactive dialogue.



Kazakhstan applauded UNEP for improving its internal coordination and its cooperation with UNDP and the GEF. He also called for a regional UNEP bureau to be established in Kazakhstan.

Egypt reiterated the importance of a regional dimension, South-South cooperation and country-owned activities.

The World Bank provided a brief summary of initiatives undertaken in the fields of technology support and capacity building, underlining that partnerships are key elements in achieving the commitments contained in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) suggested that the Working Group draw on the experiences and reviews made by the Convention's subsidiary bodies, in connection with the UNFCCC's framework for capacity building.

The Convention on Biological Diversity recalled one of its decisions on technology transfer that contains a work programme and strategic activities relevant for this meeting, and expressed a desire that these activities and timelines be harmonized with the strategic plan.

OTHER MATTERS

After a brief discussion, delegates agreed to change the tentative dates set for the second session of the Working Group, from 6-8 September to 13-15 September 2004. The meeting will still be held in Nairobi.

CLOSING OF THE SESSION

Reflecting on the day's discussions, UNEP Executive Director Klaus Töpfer thanked participants for their contributions, and pointed out that UNEP's collaboration with other specialized UN agencies and regional organizations does not imply duplication of work, but rather is essential for maximizing the outcomes of capacity building. He stressed that the exchange of views at the meeting had been extremely helpful.

President Ntagazwa explained that this session's deliberations will be incorporated into a "building-block" paper to be submitted in early August, which will serve as the basis for the negotiations taking place at the second session in September. He recognized the clear intergovernmental mandate that exists to develop a strategic plan and briefly recapitulated the proposals made by various delegations, including the need for:

- adequate funding, a long-term vision, and clearly defined goals and targets;
- a focus on the regional and subregional levels;
- better coordination of efforts to avoid duplication and account for the demands of UN Common Country Assessments;
- tailor-made approaches and a focus on strengthening national environment institutions, training and education;
- needs assessments and national ownership to be included;
- clear definitions of the terms of the UNEP mandate, the work plan and funding; and
- the promotion of private sector partnerships.

In closing, President Ntagazwa thanked participants for their valuable contributions, and declared the meeting over at 5:50 pm.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR BEFORE GC-23

SECOND SESSION OF THE WORKING GROUP: The second session of the High-level Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group for the Intergovernmental Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building will be held in Nairobi from 13-15 September 2004. The first day will be dedicated to preparatory informal consultations, followed by a two-day meeting of the Intergovernmental Working Group. For more information, contact: Beverly Miller, Secretary for UNEP Governing Council; tel: +254-2-623431; fax: +254-2-623929; e-mail: beverly.miller@unep.org; Internet: <http://www.unep.org>

THIRD SESSION OF THE WORKING GROUP: The third session of the High-level Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group for the Intergovernmental Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building will be held in Indonesia from 1-3 December 2004. For more information, contact: Beverly Miller, Secretary for UNEP Governing Council; tel: +254-2-623431; fax: +254-2-623929; e-mail: beverly.miller@unep.org; Internet: <http://www.unep.org>

23RD SESSION OF THE UNEP GOVERNING

COUNCIL: The 23rd session of the UNEP Governing Council and Global Ministerial Environmental Forum is scheduled to be held from 21-25 February 2005, in Nairobi, Kenya. For more information, contact: Beverly Miller, Secretary for UNEP Governing Council; tel: +254-2-623431; fax: +254-2-623929; e-mail: beverly.miller@unep.org; Internet: <http://www.unep.org>