

## GCSS-9/GMEF HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 8 FEBRUARY 2006

Delegates attended ministerial consultations on energy and the environment and on tourism and the environment. They also met in the Committee of the Whole (COW) to discuss international environmental governance (IEG), implementation of UNEP's Programme of Work, follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and outcomes of intergovernmental meetings, and a draft decision on chemicals management. In the evening, ministers met in plenary to discuss IEG and the outcome of the 2005 World Summit, including universal membership of the Governing Council (GC).

### MINISTERIAL CONSULTATIONS

**ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT:** Delegates addressed a range of issues, including technology transfer, financing, capacity building and climate change.

On technology transfer, ICELAND commended the contribution of UNEP's programme for the transfer of geothermal technologies to developing countries, and BHUTAN noted UNEP's contributions to solar energy development. TUVALU stressed the need for greater access to clean energy technology by small island developing States. GERMANY highlighted the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) as a technology transfer mechanism.

On financing and investment, particularly in developing countries, the NETHERLANDS stressed the need for stable market conditions for investment. The INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE (ICC) and the US supported good governance to attract investment, with the ICC commenting on the value of innovative financing arrangements, and research and development. INDONESIA highlighted the importance of financing small-scale projects. MALDIVES said there should be a special UN conference on energy development and environment. The EU said innovative public-private partnerships could solve financial problems. IRAN said her region would take a leading role in providing clean energy to the world, including nuclear energy.

Several delegates emphasized the connection between energy and climate change, and the need for investment in renewable energy sources. The CZECH REPUBLIC stressed the need to ensure that CDM investments are used for environmentally-friendly technologies. NGOs said energy issues needed a "home," and urged greater political will to promote renewable energy and energy efficiency. AUSTRIA highlighted the CDM's levy on projects as a model for raising funds for addressing global challenges. GUINEA BISSAU called for partnerships to protect tropical forests that act as carbon sinks. SAUDI ARABIA said fossil fuels would remain a major source of energy in

the coming decades, and proposed sending a message to the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) about the need for technologies to make fuel cleaner. HUNGARY called for thorough assessments of the consequences of using different energy technologies, including renewables. INDIA described its successful work in reducing emissions from its public transportation systems. CHINA described its efforts to improve energy efficiency, renewables and clean coal technology.

AUSTRIA suggested the CSD focus on review and monitoring arrangements, regional and local energy initiatives, and the integration of all relevant stakeholders. IRAQ called for special support to countries affected by war.

KUWAIT urged international support for science and technology to promote clean energy. YOUTH stressed the need for immediate energy solutions, reducing reliance on fossil fuels, and full assessments of the environmental and social factors. MALAWI stressed the challenges facing developing countries to move to hydropower, solar, wind and other technologies, and proposed the creation of a special fund to promote them.

**TOURISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT:** In a keynote speech, Deidre Shurland, Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism, stressed that sustainable tourism requires diversified products, effective planning and control, and the dissemination of best practices.

FRANCE, supported by FINLAND, stated that it would launch a working group on sustainable tourism in cooperation with UNEP. PAKISTAN said the recent earthquake has seriously affected tourism, and welcomed cooperation in developing eco-tourism. BRAZIL emphasized the need for comprehensive strategies to minimize negative impacts.

Many participants highlighted tourism's role in poverty alleviation, but stressed the need to protect the environment, traditional knowledge, and local communities. Others emphasized national efforts to promote sustainable tourism, and called for assistance to support them. The EU said most of the negative impacts of tourism were related to transportation. ITALY emphasized the role of the polluter pays principle and the precautionary principle in sustainable tourism. NIGERIA said economic instruments, including taxes and awards, could encourage sustainable tourism. The US said it did not support mandatory certification programmes. ICELAND said tourism could increase public appreciation of the environment and, with ZAMBIA and INDIA, called for participation of local communities. CHILE underlined the role of environmental impact assessments of tourism projects and mandatory codes of conduct for tourists. BHUTAN stressed the need to share tourism revenues with local communities. INDIA supported the establishment of an international working group for promoting ecotourism.

ISRAEL suggested establishing a network for bird watching linking 22 countries. EGYPT and THAILAND emphasized the need for partnerships, especially with local communities. EL SALVADOR urged UN assistance in the provision of technologies and best practices. PALESTINE said that without peace, there is no tourism.

#### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**BALI STRATEGIC PLAN:** INDONESIA presented the report of the high-level consultation on South-South cooperation in environment in the context of the Bali Strategic Plan (UNEP/GCSS.IX/INF/14) held in Jakarta in November 2005.

LESOTHO, with COLOMBIA and others, stressed the need for resource mobilization for the Bali Strategic Plan. Uganda, for the G-77/CHINA, urged the Environmental Management Group (EMG) to address implementation of the Plan. She suggested replicating UNEP-UNDP poverty projects, called on UNEP to develop a strategy for resource mobilization, and noted the absence of a dedicated financial mechanism for the Plan.

The EUROPEAN COMMUNITY proposed that UNEP immediately implement the Plan through its offices and in cooperation with other agencies. NORWAY asked UNEP to develop a strategy for cooperation with UNDP to present to the next session and, with JAPAN, AUSTRALIA and the US, urged efficient utilization of existing resources. CHINA suggested that UNEP prioritize the goal of providing financial resources for the Plan. BELGIUM commended progress achieved by the UNDP-UNEP Poverty and Environment Initiative, and called for better interagency coordination. UNDP reported on its cooperative efforts with UNEP, the need to integrate environmental considerations in poverty reduction strategies, and to work closely with countries based on national priorities.

**IMPLEMENTATION OF UNEP'S PROGRAMME OF WORK AND RELEVANT GOVERNING COUNCIL DECISIONS: Water strategy:** UNEP introduced its revised draft water strategy (UNEP/GCSS.IX/4), noting that it provides an overview and guidance for future work programmes.

TURKEY raised an objection to language on transboundary and shared waters, and BRAZIL objected to terms such as "transboundary," which he said would raise sovereignty issues. Chair Nobs clarified that this draft will be reviewed further and only adopted at the next session.

The EU highlighted the importance of integrated water resources management, capacity building, and coordination. PAKISTAN said that, "for too long big dams have been an environmental taboo subject, but it is time for this to change." NORWAY said UNEP should take the lead on sanitation issues. The US called for a focus on areas where UNEP has comparative advantages, including capacity building and South-South cooperation. VENEZUELA expressed concerns regarding text on water privatization. RAMSAR CONVENTION highlighted the role of wetland ecosystems in relation to natural disasters and combating poverty.

**Environmental emergencies:** Delegates then considered UNEP's work on environmental emergencies (UNEP/GCSS.IX/5). They were also briefed by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on joint UNEP-OCHA work. JAPAN drew attention to the Hyogo Framework for Action. SWITZERLAND stressed the need to avoid duplication of work, and the US applauded UNEP's work on waste management following the Indian Ocean tsunami.

**Youth strategy:** UNEP briefed participants on its "Tunza" youth programme (UNEP/GCSS.IX/5).

**Assessment, monitoring and early warning: State of the environment:** UNEP reported on its work in addressing environmental challenges (UNEP/GCSS.IX/10) and outlined findings from recent assessments, including the annual Global Environmental Outlook (GEO), "One Planet, Many People" Atlas, and Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. Many speakers praised these reports. The US urged further work to identify not only problems but also solutions.

**STRATEGIC APPROACH TO INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS MANAGEMENT:** Chair Nobs introduced a draft decision on the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM). Following several interventions, a drafting group was formed to finalize the text. The group finished its discussions in the afternoon, adding one preambular paragraph and three additional operative paragraphs dealing with voluntary extrabudgetary resources, contributions to the Quick Start Programme (QSP) voluntary trust fund, and resources for relevant UNEP activities and the QSP (UNEP/GCSS.IX/CRP.1/Rev.1).

**FOLLOW-UP TO WSSD AND OUTCOMES OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETINGS:** The EU supported a proposal to transform UNEP into a UN Environment Organization (UNEO). With JAPAN, the EU urged the successful fourth replenishment of the GEF. The G-77/CHINA stressed the importance of addressing consumption and production issues at the CSD. The US said World Summit follow-up work on UN coherence should focus on existing institutions. SWITZERLAND expressed regret that the 2005 World Summit had taken "a step backwards" by subordinating environment and sustainable development within the goal of development, and recommended that one person should head the Rotterdam, Stockholm and Basel Conventions. REPUBLIC OF KOREA outlined the "Seoul Initiative," which seeks to maintain a balance between environment and economic growth. JAPAN said discussions on UN system coherence relating to environmental activities should take place in the context of management reform of the entire UN system. The PHILIPPINES said UNEP inputs to CSD should focus more on developing country concerns and UNEP should play a role in climate change adaptation. NORWAY highlighted work on carbon capture and storage. NIGERIA drew attention to the 2006 Year of Deserts and Desertification. RUSSIAN FEDERATION called for greater cost-savings in the UN system by reducing fragmentation. BARCELONA CONVENTION announced the recently agreed Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development.

#### EVENING PLENARY

In a plenary session on Wednesday evening, Adnan Z. Amin, Executive Director of the Secretary-General's Panel on UN System Wide Coherence, presented on ongoing reform initiatives as follow-up to the 2005 World Summit, in particular the Secretary-General's Panel and the relevant process initiated by the President of the UN General Assembly.

In a keynote address, FRANCE argued for transforming UNEP into a UNEO. The call was supported by the EU, which also stressed the need for universal membership of the GC, as well as by IRELAND, GREECE, and GERMANY. BRAZIL voiced opposition to both universal membership and a UNEO, and the US raised objections to a UNEO. CHILE urged continuation of dialogue, and SWEDEN called for an increased focus on environment in the UN agenda.

#### IN THE CORRIDORS

Delegates predicted tense discussions on international environmental governance over the coming months, as passionate pleas for strengthening UN system-wide coherence of environmental activities were voiced in the COW and during the evening plenary session. However, IEG aficionados noted that the means for achieving this remained unresolved, as demonstrated by the strongly held divergent views expressed by delegates on the issue of universal membership and a UNEO.

**ENB SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS:** The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of the International Conference on Chemicals Management and the ninth Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environmental Forum will be available online on Monday, 13 February 2006, at <http://www.iisd.ca/unepgc/unepss9/>.