

## GC-24/GMEF HIGHLIGHTS:

### WEDNESDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 2007

On Wednesday, GC-24/GMEF delegates convened in ministerial consultations, which addressed the theme of UN reform. The COW continued consideration of policy issues and heard presentations by MEA secretariats. The drafting group and several contact groups also met during the day and late into the night.

#### MINISTERIAL CONSULTATIONS

**UNFCCC ADDRESS:** Yvo de Boer, UNFCCC Executive Secretary, addressed UNFCCC's recent developments, noting the call from the business community for ambitious policies and a clear investment perspective. Highlighting the recent IPCC report on the science of climate change, he emphasized: the economic rationale for timely action; incentives for developing countries; industrialized country leadership; and voluntary approaches. De Boer said UNFCCC COP-13 will focus on the balance between economic growth, poverty eradication and environmental protection.

**PANEL DISCUSSION ON UN REFORM:** Amb. Peter Maurer (Switzerland), Co-Chair of Informal Consultations on the Institutional Framework for UN Environmental Activities, briefed participants, highlighting the shared perspective of the need for UN reform and strengthening UNEP, and the diverging views regarding the institutional framework. Co-Chair Amb. Enrique Beruga (Mexico) stressed that the issue of UNEP/UNEO should not be divisive, and expressed optimism regarding a positive outcome of the consultative process.

Claudia McMurray, US Assistant Secretary of State, commended UNEP's work and recent partnerships. She cited the African Environment Outlook and the Bali Strategic Plan among successful UNEP outputs.

On behalf of the EU, Sigmar Gabriel, Germany's Minister of Environment, called for a stronger institutional framework and political leadership, and supported an upgraded UNEO in Nairobi.

Manjiv Puri, India's Ministry of External Affairs, said that UNEP's mandate and activities must reflect the interests of the majority of its member states. He highlighted UNEP's role in assisting developing countries through capacity building and strengthening international environmental governance (IEG).

FRANCE reported on the outcomes of the Paris Conference for Global Ecological Governance, noting that some 50 states and many NGOs supported the creation of a UNEO, and reiterated France's support to maintaining UNEP/UNEO headquarters in Nairobi. JAPAN supported streamlining UNEP and remained open to the creation of a UNEO. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA supported the establishment of a UNEO. INDONESIA inquired about the implications of transforming

UNEP into a UNEO. CHINA acknowledged UNEP's leading role in relation to the environment, but urged the involvement of other international organizations in the context of UN reform. NAMIBIA said UN reform should take into consideration the status and views of traditional leaders in Africa and Asia.

During the feedback session in the afternoon, speakers highlighted emerging consensus that the urgency and magnitude of environmental challenges have outgrown the ability of the current IEG system to address them. They also stressed the unique opportunity presented by the ongoing UN reform process, noting that the question of the appropriate institutional framework remains open. Many stressed that the message from Nairobi regarding a strengthened UNEP should be heard in New York and capitals.

**ROUNDTABLE REPORTS:** In the afternoon, facilitators of the six ministerial roundtables on UN reform reported on their groups' discussions. On UN reform in general, they highlighted a call for strong political leadership, a sense of direction, efforts to limit bureaucracy, and increased government commitment. They noted a general preference for transforming UNEP into a UNEO and called for: stronger UNEP regional presence; stable, adequate and predictable funding; improved civil society participation; assessment of UNEP programme impact; greater cooperation and synergy between UNEP and the GEF; and implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan.

#### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**DRAFT DECISIONS: Support to Africa in environmental management and protection:** The AFRICAN GROUP presented the draft decision. MEXICO, COLOMBIA and ARGENTINA called for the strengthening of all UNEP regional offices. The EU requested that AMCEN initiatives on poverty, environment and sustainable development be reflected. CANADA cautioned against duplicating NEPAD's environmental initiatives, and expressed concern over financial implications for UNEP. The draft decision was referred to the drafting group.

**World environmental situation:** The US, supported by BRAZIL, opposed the draft decision, saying that its intent is unclear, and many issues identified therein are beyond the competence of UNEP. Supporting the draft decision, the EU noted the need to strengthen UNEP's early warning activities and explore options for work on climate change adaptation strategies. In reference to ecosystems services, ARGENTINA cautioned against disguised forestry and agricultural subsidies. A contact group was established to consider how to proceed with the decision.

**Municipal solid waste treatment:** MOROCCO presented the draft decision, supported by G-77/China. CANADA, the EU, the US and NEW ZEALAND opposed the draft, arguing that waste management is sufficiently addressed under the Basel

Convention, and does not warrant international action. The US suggested developing a toolkit of best policies and practices to address municipal waste at the national level. Many developing countries urged UNEP to address this issue, questioning whether the Basel Convention is sufficiently equipped to address municipal waste. The matter was referred to the drafting group.

#### **2010-2020 UN Decade for deserts and desertification:**

ALGERIA presented the draft decision, noting support by the GEF and the World Bank. The US, the EU and AUSTRALIA opposed the draft, questioning the added value of such a Decade after the 2006 UN Year of Deserts and Desertification. They pledged their support to ongoing activities under the CCD. Indonesia, on behalf of the G-77/CHINA, and the RUSSIAN FEDERATION supported the draft decision, arguing that a UN Decade would help attract international attention. The matter was referred to a contact group.

**Water policy and strategy:** Delegates discussed the proposed updated water policy and strategy, expressing unanimous support, but suggesting minor amendments. The draft decision was referred to the drafting group.

**IEG:** The EU, MEXICO and CANADA supported GC's universal membership, while JAPAN, KENYA and NIGERIA opposed. MEXICO suggested adding a paragraph on support to UNEP regional offices in reference to implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan. On financing, the US said a compelling case for a voluntary indicative scale of contributions has not been made, while SWITZERLAND, NORWAY and NIGERIA supported such a scale. The draft decision was referred to the drafting group.

**South-South cooperation:** The US requested reconsideration of language critical of the Bali Strategic Plan. The EU suggested merging this draft decision with the one on IEG. The draft decision was referred to the drafting group.

**PRESENTATIONS BY MEA SECRETARIATS:** The MONTREAL PROTOCOL highlighted a significant decrease in worldwide consumption of ozone-depleting substances, and lessons learned, including: achievable goals fostering a culture of compliance and confidence; the need for global solutions; the role of industry in developing new technologies; and public awareness and mobilization.

The BASEL CONVENTION said the toxic waste dumping incident in Côte d'Ivoire illustrated difficulties faced by developing countries in enforcing MEAs, and called for integrated waste management. She further highlighted the joint working group with UNEP on mercury waste, and the establishment of an *ad hoc* joint working group of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions.

The MULTILATERAL FUND FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MONTREAL PROTOCOL described activities aimed at providing technical assistance and capacity building, particularly in developing countries. The ROTTERDAM and STOCKHOLM CONVENTIONS described ongoing work and synergies between the two conventions, highlighting efforts to address non-compliance. CITES briefed participants on the upcoming COP-14. CBD urged efforts to halt unprecedented ecosystem destruction. CCD outlined key outcomes of the 2006 International Year on Deserts and Desertification. CMS highlighted how wildlife watching activities have generated revenues for reinvesting in conservation. The GEF discussed activities in the context of the fourth replenishment and reforms.

#### **DRAFTING GROUP**

In the morning, delegates considered the draft decision on support for Africa. Debate mainly focused on operative text on UNEP's role with additional text on collaboration with UN and other institutions. The final text was forwarded to the COW for consideration.

Delegates heard an outline of the draft decision on municipal solid waste treatment highlighting that, while there is some overlap with the Basel Convention, there are distinct areas of difference such as the emphasis on integrated waste

management. A small group convened in informal discussions and, in the absence of a breakthrough, a group of developed countries proposed introducing a compromise text on Thursday.

On IEG, deliberations first focused on GC universal membership, with polarized views eventually leading to bracketed text. In the evening, despite concerns about addition of bracketed text, the group made progress, including on compromise text on the draft strategy on strengthening UNEP's scientific base. The group will consider the revised text on Thursday.

#### **CONTACT GROUPS**

**BUDGET AND PROGRAMME OF WORK:** The group continued consideration of the draft decision on the proposed programme of work and budget. Two major groups supported the paragraph on a medium-term strategic plan, while two developed countries enquired about evaluation and coordination mechanisms. Disagreements persisted on the total amount earmarked for the Environment Fund programme activities in 2010-2011, with the majority supporting UNEP's suggested figure of US\$140 million, some delegations favoring US\$130 million, and one delegation initially opposing mentioning any figure, but later agreeing to refer to an "indicative" figure. The group also began consideration of the draft decision on the management of trust funds and earmarked contributions. One delegation objected to the proposed name change of the trust fund on mercury and other metals, pending the outcome of the COW.

**CHEMICALS:** The contact group took up the draft decisions on heavy metals (EU, in UNEP/GC/24/COW/CRP.7), illegal international traffic in hazardous chemicals (Nigeria, in UNEP/GC/24/COW/CRP.9), and SAICM (EU, in UNEP/GC/24/COW/CRP.5).

The contact group devoted most of its time to negotiating the draft decision on mercury. A compromise Chair's draft on mercury was introduced in the morning, followed in the afternoon by the Chair's composite text, which incorporated countries' amendments. Several delegates insisted on a political commitment to a legally binding instrument on mercury, stressing that voluntary initiatives alone could not guarantee effective action. A "two-track" approach was proposed, to take forward actions regarding mercury, while keeping open the path to a binding instrument. There was broad agreement that the content of the decision should follow this format. However, the suggestion to include a "political statement" on a future legal international framework raised objections from some countries. In this connection, several alternatives were proposed, ranging from a clear commitment to a full and gradual analysis, which would lead to the consideration of different and viable options, including a legally binding instrument. The mandate of an *ad hoc* working group, proposed to be established by GC-24/GMEF, was discussed at length.

Two small drafting groups also convened, attempting to resolve controversial language on SAICM and illegal traffic. The contact group succeeded in finalizing the draft on the latter issue, but negotiated late into the night on the mercury decision.

#### **IN THE BREEZEWAYS**

The mid-way point of GC-24/GMEF was characterized by unexpected stumbling blocks, as well as some headway. Although initially perceived as hardly contentious, draft decisions on municipal waste and a UN Decade on deserts and desertification were opposed by some developed countries in view of other ongoing processes. Disappointed, some developing country delegates alluded to a North-South divide, wondering whether, at this rate of deliberations, the drafting group would have sufficient time to give due attention to the core issues of GC-24/GMEF. Overall, however, delegates expressed satisfaction with the meeting's progress, notably in relation to strengthening the role of UNEP, potentially as a UNEO. While one delegate cautioned against "merely changing the name of the club and spending a lot of money in the process," others emphasized benefits of a strong UNEO, even if only to send out a signal that environmental matters warrant a specialized UN agency.