

TENTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL/GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM: 20-22 FEBRUARY 2008

The tenth Special Session of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GCSS-10/GMEF) opens today at the Grimaldi Forum conference centre in the Principality of Monaco, and will continue until Friday, 22 February 2008. Ministers and delegates at GCSS-10/GMEF will discuss the emerging policy issues of “Globalization and the environment – mobilizing finance to meet the climate challenge,” as well as “International environmental governance and the United Nations reform.”

The GCSS-10/GMEF will also consider draft decisions on: UNEP Medium-term Strategy 2010-2013; chemicals management including mercury and waste management; response to the findings of the fourth Global Environment Outlook (GEO-4) report; sustainable development of the Arctic region; the International Year of Combating Climate Change; and adoption of decisions at future special sessions of the GC/GMEF.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNEP GC/GMEF

Upon the recommendation of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, the UN General Assembly, in its resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 1972, established UNEP as the central UN 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 the recommendation of policies to achieve this, and the provision of policy guidance for the direction and coordination of environmental programmes in the UN system. The GC reports to the UN General Assembly, which also elects the GC’s 58 members for four-year terms, taking into account the principle of equitable geographical representation. The GMEF is constituted by the GC, as envisaged in UN General Assembly resolution 53/242. The purpose of the GMEF is to institute, at a high political level, a process for reviewing important and emerging policy issues in the field of the environment.

GC-19: The nineteenth session of the GC convened in two segments from 27 January - 7 February 1997, and from 3-4 April 1997, in Nairobi, Kenya. Delegates adopted the Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of UNEP, which expanded the mandate to include: analyzing the state of the global environment; assessing global and regional environmental trends; providing policy advice and early warning information

on environmental threats; and catalyzing and promoting international cooperation and action, based on the best scientific and technical capabilities available.

GC-20: GC-20 took place from 1-5 February 1999, in Nairobi, and 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.

GCSS-6/GMEF: The sixth Special Session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GCSS-6/GMEF) took place from 29-31 May 2000, in Malmö, Sweden. Ministers adopted the Malmö Ministerial Declaration, which agreed that the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) should review the requirements for a greatly strengthened institutional structure for international environmental governance (IEG).

GC-21/GMEF: GC-21/GMEF took place from 5-9 February 2001, in Nairobi. Delegates 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. They also adopted decision 21/7, which requested the UNEP Executive Director to examine the need for a strategic approach to international chemicals management (SAICM).

GCSS-7/GMEF: GCSS-7/GMEF was held from 13-15 February 2002, in Cartagena, Colombia. In its decision SS.VII/1, GC/GMEF adopted the IGM report, which contains recommendations aimed at strengthening IEG, including through: improved coherence in international environmental policy-making; strengthening the role and financial situation of UNEP; improved coordination among and effectiveness of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs); and capacity building, technology transfer and country-level coordination. Delegates also adopted decisions including on SAICM at the global level.

WSSD: The WSSD was held from 26 August - 4 September 2002, in Johannesburg, South Africa. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) sets out a framework of action to implement the commitments originally agreed at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. The JPOI, among other things, emphasizes that the international community should fully implement the outcomes of UNEP decision SS.VII/1 on IEG.

GC-22/GMEF: GC-22/GMEF took place from 3-7 February 2003, in Nairobi. Delegates adopted more than 40 decisions on issues relating to IEG, post-conflict environmental assessment, UNEP’s water policy and strategy, SAICM, a mercury programme, support to Africa, production and consumption patterns, and the environment and cultural diversity.

GCSS-8/GMEF: GCSS-8/GMEF took place from 29-31 March 2004, in Jeju, Republic of Korea. At the conclusion of the ministerial consultations, delegates adopted the "Jeju Initiative," containing the Chair's summary of the discussions and decisions on: small island developing states; waste management; regional annexes; and the implementation of decision SS.VII/1 on IEG.

GC-23/GMEF: The GC-23/GMEF took place from 21-25 February 2005, in Nairobi. Ministers considered the implementation of internationally agreed development goals, and adopted decisions on, among other things: the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building; IEG; chemicals management; UNEP's water policy and strategy; gender equality and the environment; poverty and the environment; and strengthening environmental emergency response and developing disaster prevention, preparedness, mitigation and early warning systems.

2005 WORLD SUMMIT: The 2005 World Summit was held at UN headquarters in New York, from 14-16 September. Delegates recognized the need for more efficient environmental activities in the UN system, through, *inter alia*, enhanced coordination, improved policy advice and guidance, and strengthened scientific knowledge. They further agreed to explore the possibility of a more coherent institutional framework, including a more integrated structure, building on existing institutions and internationally agreed instruments, as well as treaty bodies and UN specialized agencies.

ICCM: The International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM) was held from 4-6 February 2006, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, immediately prior to GCSS-9/GMEF. Delegates completed negotiations and adopted the SAICM, including a high-level declaration, overarching policy strategy and global plan of action.

GCSS-9/GMEF: GCSS-9/GMEF was held from 7-9 February 2006, in Dubai, and adopted the decision on SAICM. Ministerial consultations addressed, *inter alia*, policy issues relating to energy and environment, chemicals management, and tourism and the environment. The plenary discussion on environmental governance, outcome of the 2005 World Summit, and GC universal membership did not produce an agreed outcome and delegates decided that the report of the meeting should reflect the divergent views expressed.

GC-24/GMEF: GC-24/GMEF convened from 5-9 February 2007, in Nairobi. Delegates adopted 15 decisions on issues relating, *inter alia*, to: chemicals, including a provision to establish the *Ad Hoc* Open-ended Working Group to Review and Assess Measures to Address the Global Issue of Mercury; the world environmental situation; IEG; South-South cooperation; waste management; 2010-2020 UN Decade for Deserts and the Fight Against Desertification; UNEP's updated water policy and strategy; and support to Africa in environmental management and protection. The GC/GMEF also approved the budget and work programme for the 2008-2009 biennium.

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

INFORMAL CONSULTATIVE PROCESS: The UN General Assembly at its 60th session established the Informal Consultative Process on the Institutional Framework for the UN Environmental Activities. The process seeks to strengthen the current system of IEG by focusing on questions related to: UNEP; improvement of cooperation within the UN and among the MEAs; as well as funding mechanisms and partnerships.

On 14 June 2007, following year-long consultations with UN member states, Co-Chairs Amb. Claude Heller (Mexico) and Amb. Peter Maurer (Switzerland) presented an Options Paper, which identifies seven building blocks to strengthen IEG: scientific assessment, monitoring and early warning capacity; inter-agency coordination and cooperation; MEAs; regional presence and activities at the regional level; the Bali Strategic Plan, capacity building, technology support; information technology, partnerships and advocacy; and financing. In addition, the Paper addresses the broader transformation of the IEG system, including the possibility of transforming UNEP into a UN Environment Organization (UNEO).

On 10 September and 26 October 2007, UN member states were given the opportunity to respond to the Options Paper. The discussions reflected a divergence of views with no consensus on the way forward. The Co-Chairs have since expressed their intention to facilitate a draft resolution to move the IEG process forward.

FIRST FRIENDS OF UNEO MEETING: Ministers and high-level representatives from some 50 countries that joined the Group of Friends of UNEO met from 12-13 April 2007, in Agadir, Morocco. Participants examined the mandates and institutional aspects involved in the process of setting up the UNEO, and agreed to present their views during the UN General Assembly informal consultations.

MINISTERIAL MEETING ON ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: Organized by the Government of Brazil, the informal Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Sustainable Development: Challenges for International Governance was held from 3-4 September 2007, in Rio de Janeiro. Some 22 countries participated, including Foreign Affairs and Environment Ministers. The meeting's summary identifies: areas of convergence in the debate on IEG and sustainable development, such as the insufficiency of current financing sources; areas lacking convergence on which further discussion is required, such as the transformation of UNEP into a new institution; and next steps to be taken collectively, notably the wide-ranging and universal discussion on the topic.

UNEP FINANCE INITIATIVE GLOBAL ROUNDTABLE: Held from 24-25 October 2007, in Melbourne, Australia, the UNEP Finance Initiative Global Roundtable brought together over 450 representatives of the private sector to discuss how finance, insurance, investment and capital markets can contribute to the global sustainability agenda.

REGIONAL CONSULTATIVE MEETINGS: Six Regional Consultative Meetings in preparation for the ninth Global Civil Society Forum (GCSF-9) and GCSS-10/GMEF were held from October to November 2007. The major groups agreed on statements addressing the main issues for consideration at the GCSS-10/GMEF.

FIRST OEWG MEETING ON MERCURY: The First Meeting of the *Ad hoc* Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) to Review and Assess Measures to Address the Global Issue of Mercury was held from 12-16 November 2007, in Bangkok, Thailand. Guided by UNEP decision 24/3 IV on mercury, delegates discussed options for enhanced voluntary measures, and new or existing international legal instruments on mercury. They also agreed on seven tasks to be undertaken by the UNEP Secretariat in the intersessional period in preparation for the second meeting of the OEWG, which will take place in October 2008.

UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE: The UN Climate Change Conference was held from 3-14 December 2007, in Bali, Indonesia. The Conference concluded with the agreement of the Bali Roadmap – a two-year process to finalize a post-2012 regime by December 2009, including the establishment of the *Ad hoc* Working Group on the Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention. On finance-related issues, delegates, *inter alia*, adopted a decision operationalizing the Adaptation Fund under the Kyoto Protocol, and agreed to consider "positive incentives" to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries. An assessment of investment and financial flows relevant to the development of an effective and appropriate international response to climate change was also presented during the Conference.

GCSF-9: GCSF-9 met on 19 February 2008, in Monaco. The meeting addressed the emerging policy issues selected for GCSS-10/GMEF, as well as: opportunities for the engagement of major groups at the GCSS-10/GMEF; proposed guidelines on enhancing the participation of major groups at UNEP's governance level; and the UNEP Medium-term Strategy 2010-2013. Participants presented on regional civil society consultations convened by UNEP in 2007, and engaged in active discussion with the UNEP Executive Director.