

## GC-26/GMEF HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 23 FEBRUARY 2011

Delegates at the 26th session of the GC-26/GMEF convened in the morning for ministerial consultations on IEG, and on coordination and cooperation within the UN system on environmental matters and state of the environment in the Committee of the Whole (COW). The drafting group on IEG completed its work mid-day. In the afternoon, delegates in the GMEF met in four ministerial roundtables on IEG. The COW met into the night to discuss draft decisions on the state of the environment, strengthening international cooperation for environmental crisis response, and other agenda items. COW Chair Bratasida deferred discussion of several decisions, announcing the COW would convene on Thursday morning to complete its work.

### MINISTERIAL CONSULTATIONS

On Wednesday morning, GC-26/GMEF President Aguilar Rivero (Spain) opened the session, noting it would focus on IEG (UNEP Doc. 26/17/Add.2), and GC-26/GMEF Vice-President Muslera (Uruguay) would preside.

John Njoroge Michuki, Minister of Environment, Kenya, stressed that the GC should recommend agreement by the UN General Assembly of the need for a new form of IEG. Paula Lehtomaki, Minister of Environment, Finland, and Co-Chair of the Consultative Group of Ministers on IEG reform, encouraged the GC to endorse the Nairobi-Helsinki outcome. Norbert Röttgen, Minister for Environment and Nuclear Safety, Germany, on behalf of the EU, stressed the need for reforms in the UN system.

**PANEL DISCUSSION:** Achim Steiner, Executive Director, UNEP moderated the discussions with panelists. Henri Djombo, Minister of Forestry and Environment, Congo, proposed formulating concrete proposals to guide nations' decisions on IEG. Carlos Castaño, Vice-Minister of Environment, Colombia, emphasized that more clarity is needed on the role of the environment pillar in sustainable development. Kerri-Ann Jones, Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, US, noted that the environment is the weakest pillar of sustainable development, and that greater political will, not the change of an organization, was required.

On the participation of civil society, Jan Kubiš, Executive Secretary, UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), highlighted the UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus convention) as a successful example of enabling civil society participation. Maria Ivanova,

Civil Society Advisory Group on IEG, proposed talking in terms of global environmental governance (GEG), encompassing the participation of civil society.

Hungary, on behalf of the EU, supported reforms in UNEP to form a new agency. FRANCE called for a world environment organization, noting that such an organization should provide strategic vision, recognize the role of civil society, play a leadership role in the UN and harmonize synergies between MEAs. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION said it was premature to transform UNEP into a specialized agency. IRAN expressed support for strengthening UNEP in its current form, with improved funding. NEW ZEALAND proposed supporting existing mechanisms to fill gaps in the current architecture. GUATEMALA and MEXICO emphasized that IEG should be streamlined and UNEP strengthened. JAPAN said that the problem of current IEG is the slow response to environmental degradation.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES emphasized the need to make decisions about natural resources at local levels and called for re-designing relationships with civil society.

**MINISTERIAL ROUNDTABLES:** On Wednesday afternoon, discussions on IEG continued in four ministerial roundtables. Issues discussed included: the integration of a strengthened IEG system in a reformed institutional framework for sustainable development; the role of IEG in achieving sustainable development at the national level; enhancing UNEP; and creating a new umbrella organization for sustainable development and a world environment organization.

ITALY said that there is no competition between IEG and a framework for sustainable development, and called for incremental and system-wide changes in IEG. AUSTRALIA suggested that "form should follow function" and asked whether some UNEP activities should change, in view of the existing UNEP mandate. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Secretariat proposed that GC membership be extended to all UN members. The US noted its disagreement with the nature of IEG reforms and underlined that reforming the environmental pillar of sustainable development depends on national priorities. FINLAND underscored that the environmental pillar must be strengthened to enable sustainable development governance. Opposing a new environment organization, CÔTE D'IVOIRE, CHAD and INDIA reiterated the need to strengthen UNEP. DJIBOUTI noted that some of the positions taken by African countries on IEG were not consistent with those of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment. The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) lamented the absence of political will and leadership in IEG reform.

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE****COORDINATION AND COOPERATION WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM ON ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS: EMG: BRAZIL**

proposed text requesting UNEP to identify existing studies on the green economy. NORWAY proposed text promoting the Poverty-Environment Initiative as a model for future cooperation between UNEP and other agencies.

**STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT: Global Environment Monitoring System Water Programme (GEMS):** The US presented an amended version of draft decision 15 on GEMS (UNEP/GC.26/L.1), based on consultations with Canada and Hungary on behalf of the EU. Lauding the EU's commitment to improving water quality, the US expressed thanks to all parties for collaborating on amendments to prevent "unintended consequences" from hindering the work of GEMS.

Delegates agreed to the draft decision with amendments on, among other things, the encouragement of cooperation at the regional level to enhance water-monitoring systems at the global level.

**10YFP on sustainable consumption and production:** COW Chair Bratasida (Indonesia) presented the amended draft decision on the ten-year framework programme (10YFP) (UNEP/GC.26/CRP.5).

In discussions on preambular paragraphs, the US, with BRAZIL, preferred shortened language for a proposal from Hungary, on behalf of the EU, welcoming the Chair's summary for the High-level Intersessional Meeting on the 10YFP. On approaches to achieve sustainable consumption and production, INDONESIA proposed the insertion of, *inter alia*, the need for policy and tools for implementation.

In operative paragraphs, delegates agreed on the need to avoid pre-judging the outcomes of the discussions on the 10YFP, but differed on which details would be overly prescriptive. PANAMA, BRAZIL and Hungary, on behalf of the EU, agreed to compromise text from the US, supported by SWITZERLAND, retaining reference to "appropriate" institutional arrangements. Delegates agreed to proposals from BRAZIL and the US that the framework be "action-oriented," "concise" and "practical." SWITZERLAND supported NORWAY's proposed text referring to UNEP as a lead agency on the 10YFP.

In a late-night session, the COW discussed and adopted the amended draft decision. GUATEMALA, supported by Hungary for the EU, emphasized the importance of presenting the 10-year framework for adoption at CSD 19, rather than deferring this decision to Rio 2012.

**Chemicals and waste management:** Chair Bratasida introduced the draft decisions approved by the working group on chemicals management (UNEP/GC.26/CW/L.2), on the consultative process on financing options for chemicals and wastes and on enhancing cooperation and coordination within the chemicals and wastes cluster, which were adopted by the COW.

**South-south cooperation, oceans, status of environmental treaties:** The CBD Secretariat clarified that the CBD COP had welcomed but not yet adopted the Multi-Year Plan of Action for South-South Cooperation on Biodiversity for Development.

In the evening, the COW considered the draft decision on South-South cooperation on biodiversity (UNEP/GC.26/CRP.3). The US, supported by Hungary on behalf of the EU, expressed concern about operative text being included in a preambular paragraph, and with BRAZIL, supported by CUBA, agreed to discuss those actions under the relevant operational paragraphs. CANADA, supported by Hungary on behalf of the EU, said language to welcome the finalization of the Multi-Year Plan of Action was premature, and that parties should instead "look forward to" its finalization.

**COORDINATION AND COOPERATION WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM ON ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS:**

In the afternoon, the Secretariat briefed delegates on coordination and cooperation with major groups (UNEP/GC.26/INF/5 and UNEP/GC.26/INF/19).

**ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT:** In the afternoon, the Secretariat briefed delegates on environment and development (UNEP/GC.26/6, UNEP/GC.26/11, UNEP/GC.26/11/Add.1 and UNEP/GC.26/16).

**FOLLOW-UP TO AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOMES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SUMMITS AND MAJOR INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETINGS:**

In the afternoon, the Secretariat briefed delegates on outcomes of UN summits including decisions of the GC (UNEP/GC.26/7, UNEP/GC.26/7/Add.1, UNEP/GC.26/INF/16, UNEP/GC.26/12, UNEP/GC.26/INF/15, UNEP/GC.26/INF/3, UNEP/GC.26/INF/4). She highlighted resolutions of the UN General Assembly in which governments had requested UNEP to "fully operationalize" an IPBES and convene a meeting to determine institutional arrangements and modalities for IPBES, contribute to Rio 2012 and coordinate UN activities for the Decade for Biodiversity.

**STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS RESPONSE:**

SWITZERLAND presented a draft decision on environmental emergency response (UNEP/GC.26/L.1: UNEP/GC.26/L.2). INDONESIA requested the addition of text to ensure national sovereignty and territorial integrity. The US proposed the addition of the term "preparedness" to emergency response.

Regarding mainstreaming environment into humanitarian action, BRAZIL and CUBA suggested deleting mention of post-crisis recovery, reconstruction and peace-building, due to security-related sensitivities. The US, GUATEMALA and Hungary on behalf of the EU emphasized the "vital link" between humanitarian action and post-crisis recovery and reconstruction, but agreed to deletion of the paragraph.

CUBA opposed listing environmental factors leading to disaster, because it may imply an order of priorities. The PHILIPPINES, opposed by the US, proposed replacing text referring to "particular vulnerability" with "increasing vulnerability" to natural and man-made disasters. INDONESIA, supported by GUATEMALA, noted that developing countries are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and that the issue has not yet been resolved under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. GUATEMALA objected to the removal of text encouraging UNEP to continue to strengthen its integrated approaches to, *inter alia*, adapting to the impacts of climate change.

**BUDGET AND PROGRAMME OF WORK:** Chair Bratasida also presented the draft decisions approved by the working group on the programme of work and the budget (UNEP/GC.26/CW/L.3), which were adopted with an amendment from the US.

**IN THE BREEZEWAYS**

As the GC-26/GMEF moved into its penultimate day, delegates braved a confusing assortment of ministerial round tables, drafting groups, side events and briefings, missing some and turning up at the wrong ones. According to a participant, the pace was quickening and the work-load building up, making it hard for small delegations to follow all negotiations and other important events. On the bright side, the restricted time space of four days (the GC's usually run for five), which worried some delegations at the start of the session, is proving beneficial. A veteran negotiator noted "the unusual speed" with which a number of draft decisions were finalized on Wednesday.

**ENB SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS:** The Earth Negotiations Bulletin summary and analysis of GC-26/GMEF will be available on Monday, 28 February 2011 online at: <http://www.iisd.ca/unepgc/26unepgc/>