



**HIGHLIGHTS FROM INTER-LINKAGES --  
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SYNERGIES  
AND COORDINATION BETWEEN MEAS  
THURSDAY, 15 JULY 1999**

Participants at the International Conference on Synergies and Coordination between MEAs met in five working groups throughout the day on Thursday.

**WORKING GROUPS**

**SCIENTIFIC MECHANISMS:** This working group, co-chaired by Robert Watson, IPCC, and Akiko Domoto, GLOBE, focused its discussions on identifying key issues and linkages as well as gaps in knowledge, building and strengthening scientific capacity, undertaking assessment processes, and improving communication.

Participants proposed the establishment of an *ad hoc*, independent and geographically and gender-balanced panel to identify key issues and linkages as well as gaps in scientific knowledge. Regarding the appropriate framework by which to identify such linkages, the group emphasized the need to use a broader development approach rather than a purely environmental approach. Participants raised the issue of addressing areas not covered by existing conventions and asked how assessment of an issue can trigger international dialogue.

Regarding scientific capacity, participants suggested better utilization of existing capacity, networking of experts and building of negotiators' scientific capacity, particularly in developing countries. The group recommended mechanisms to build capacity as well as improving mechanisms to identify national expertise. It was noted that although much effort has been made build capacity in the natural sciences, inadequate attention has been given to impacts, adaptation measures and the social sciences.

When undertaking a scientific assessment, the group recommended applying an issue-based model that highlights relevant linkages rather than basing the assessment on the linkages themselves. Participants stressed the importance of clearly identifying the linkages within an issue-specific assessment. Participants warned against a process dominated by technical experts and stressed the need for policy makers to identify key policy issues before an assessment is undertaken. Noting that gaps in the policy process would hinder action once an assessment is made, participants stressed the need for recognition of inter-linkages by governments and secretariats.

The group underscored the importance of an appropriate method for communication of inter-linkages to policy makers. Participants emphasized conveying information on the issues as well as the links and their importance, and highlighting the links between the environment and other sectors such as agriculture and transportation. The group also stressed communication with the public and simplification of academic assessments to ensure a broader audience.

Three papers were presented, on synergies and coordination of international instruments on oceans and seas, linkages between the Montreal and Kyoto Protocols and recent initiatives to address the

problem of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), and options and needs for inter-linkages between the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, CBD and FCCC.

**FINANCE:** This working group, chaired by Remy Paris, OECD, initially focused on synergies and harmonization and later addressed the national context and programming issues for international donors. To enhance synergies, participants stressed that environmental objectives should be placed in the context of national development priorities. Several speakers emphasized the importance of fulfilling the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities in financing implementation of the relevant Rio agreements. Significant discussion focused on the need for harmonization of financing at various levels, with specific attention to differing priorities of donors and recipients. Side effects of and conflicts between MEA objectives were also highlighted, such as the socio-economic impacts of ozone reduction projects on developing country enterprises and ozone-friendly substitutes contributing to greenhouse gas emissions.

Regarding the national context, participants emphasized the need for demand-driven efforts to identify and promote synergies. Several stressed the need to avoid dependencies on external financing and emphasized that, to be sustainable, MEA implementation in developing countries must address development objectives. Participants recommended that convention focal points work with relevant planning agencies to identify how convention commitments fit into national development frameworks, with finances allocated explicitly for this purpose. The group identified capacity building priorities, including: development of local potential to understand and identify synergies for relevant MEAs; increased awareness of existing funding resources; and improvement of skills for financial management, project monitoring and reporting. Case studies on activities supporting both sustainable development and MEA objectives as well as environmental valuation exercises were also recommended. It was noted that synergistic projects require greater coordination, may not fit topic-specific funding criteria and should be pursued only where significant benefit is identified.

On international financial institutions and bilateral donors, participants recommended identifying gaps in financial resources provided by the GEF and the Montreal Protocol's Multilateral Fund for convention implementation. In prioritizing donor funding, participants emphasized programme activities over projects, decentralized management that incorporates democratic governance, resource flows that leverage local resources, local capacity building, longer time-frames and qualitative project evaluations. Participants called for statistical information on donor funding and grant financing for pilot projects. Some addressed the relationship between regional development banks and the GEF and expressed concern with low disbursement levels and increasingly complicated application and reporting procedures. Several noted difficulties in operationalizing the incremental costs principle and its possible conflicts with project ownership and sustainability.

Participants also stressed the potential role of national environmental funds and the need to understand market responses in the context of meeting MEA objectives. The group briefly considered

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENTS

the possible long-term need for additional financial mechanisms, noting that the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism could offer possible lessons and opportunities.

**HARMONIZATION OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND INFORMATION EXCHANGES:** This working group, chaired by Mark Collins, WCMC, addressed the following items: sharing data internationally; harmonizing reporting; improving data collection; improving public information; and building capacity.

Participants focused on recommending how MEA secretariats could share information more effectively. Several issues were identified, including: coordination between information officers in MEA secretariats; the role of knowledge brokers; feasibility studies to identify next steps; and a top-down approach to promote information sharing. One participant noted constraints to information sharing, such as government bureaucracy and lack of transparency and access to information. Another expressed concern over the absence of a mechanism to ensure appropriate information dissemination.

The group recommended harmonizing information to minimize national governments' burden of multiple reporting requirements and using existing reporting mechanisms to reduce duplication. Methodologies identified for harmonization included: outlining reporting requirements of MEAs; implementing pilot projects in selected countries; and identifying information that can be gathered and analyzed at the national level. Participants discussed experiences with reporting requirements and noted insufficient human resources, absence of a standardized format and poor coordination between government departments.

Participants highlighted the need for financial assistance at the country level to improve data collection, but recognized the need to better utilize existing sources. Special attention was paid to the complexity of data collection at the national level, remote sensing and regional cooperation. Participants also noted the urgent need to mobilize data from various relevant institutions, such as UNEP, IUCN, CSD, the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank.

The working group identified the targets for and goals of improving public information. One participant noted the language barrier in disseminating available information. The potential role of NGOs, the private sector and environmental journalists was highlighted. Participants agreed on the importance of making MEAs understandable to the public and relevant to their day-to-day lives.

The group discussed the need for capacity building and explored options to achieve it, including a needs assessment, capacity building for promoting inter-linkages between MEAs and national planning, educational programmes and capacity building for core teams. The special needs of small countries, particularly small island developing States, were emphasized. Participants supported capacity building for developing country delegates for participating in MEA negotiations.

**ISSUE MANAGEMENT:** The working group on issue management was co-chaired by Salvano Briceño, former Deputy Executive Secretary, CCD, and Principal Officer, FCCC, and Brett Orlando, Climate Change Programme Officer, IUCN. Participants agreed that the issue management approach could work as a practical tool for coordinating activities requiring an integrated approach among MEAs. Participants focused on how the issue management approach might function, emphasizing the need to develop concrete recommendations to operationalize it.

To assist in developing specific and practical ideas that would go beyond the theory of issue management, participants discussed how issue management might apply to one cross-cutting issue. Employing land use as an example, participants identified relevant actors, including conventions, UN agencies, financing bodies and other groups; common priorities among conventions; functional areas in which cooperation and coordination could occur, including research, policy and planning, implementation, evaluation and capacity building; and the decision making bodies that could facilitate implementation of the process.

Participants recommended that UNU develop case studies for applying issue management to cross-cutting issues, identifying: potentially conflicting policies and measures for each convention as well as for future protocols and decisions by the relevant COPs; the relevant provisions, policies and practices of each convention; and the impacts of other international processes such as the WTO. Participants said these case studies could be used to develop a set of guiding principles that could be applied to any cross-cutting issue.

Other cross-cutting issues that participants identified as potentially benefiting from an issue management approach included, *inter alia*: energy, coastal management, watershed management, education, capacity building, national reporting and trade and investment. Participants also discussed a proposal for further development of the concept of issue management as a tool for enhancing synergies in the implementation of MEAs, which could include a set of goals or benchmarks as well as accountability mechanisms.

### **SYNERGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:**

This working group was co-chaired by J.A. van Ginkel, UNU Rector, and Gary Sampson, former Director, WTO Committee on Trade and Environment. The group started by reviewing the existing system of MEAs. It was noted that different environmental treaties emerged in an *ad hoc* manner as knowledge developed about the dangers of specific environmental problems. Separate international institutions were created to service these different agreements, resulting in a fragmented system of MEAs with numerous gaps and overlaps. One participant suggested that fragmentation is not necessarily detrimental and may be necessary given the need for specialization and development of expertise to address specific environmental problems. The working group discussed ways to redress this fragmentation. Some participants suggested a moratorium on new MEAs to prevent further fragmentation, recommending that existing MEAs address new issues.

Several participants highlighted the important role of UNEP in facilitating coordination between MEAs. It was suggested that UNEP identify areas of overlap and create necessary institutional arrangements and partnerships to address them. The usefulness of recommendations in the Report of the UN Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements was noted, particularly those calling for regular meetings between MEA secretariat heads, UNEP consultation with COP Presidents, and clustering of the conventions. Participants emphasized the need to also consult with the chairs of MEA bureaus, government representatives, scientists and legal experts to best determine where synergies can be built. The increase in Memoranda of Cooperation between MEAs was highlighted as an indicator of progress in forging synergies, although some participants felt these were not ambitious enough.

The group highlighted the need for better implementation and enforcement of MEAs at the national level. They underscored the importance of capacity building to enable governments to holistically implement the various MEAs. They identified the lack of coordination among government ministries in implementing the different conventions as particularly problematic. One participant stressed that capacity should be built according to clusters of treaties rather than to individual MEAs.

It was proposed that a tool kit be developed to help governments achieve more integrated and efficient implementation of MEAs. It was also suggested that a road map for future direction be formulated, identifying linkages and complementarities among MEAs as well as instruments to achieve coordinated implementation most effectively. One participant stressed that such a road map should have a regional emphasis.

Participants noted the insufficiency of scientific research needed to fully implement the numerous MEAs, partly due to inadequate funding. They discussed the need for scientific assessments that address the synergistic effects of the various environmental problems covered by MEAs. One participant proposed that an independent body assess scientific research on the risks to human health of these synergistic effects. The need for mechanisms to define priorities for policy-relevant research for each convention and to identify in particular those that cut across multiple MEAs was emphasized.