



**SUMMARY REPORT OF THE INFORMAL  
REGIONAL CONSULTATION ON INTER-  
LINKAGES: SYNERGIES AND COORDINATION  
AMONG MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL  
AGREEMENTS  
26-27 FEBRUARY 2001**

The Informal Regional Consultation on Inter-linkages: Synergies and Coordination Among Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) took place from 26-27 February 2001 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The Consultation, organized by the United Nations University (UNU) in collaboration with the Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment of the Government of Malaysia, the Ministry of the Environment of Japan, and the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) of Malaysia, was attended by approximately 130 participants, including representatives of MEA secretariats, governments, the academic and scientific community, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. The Consultation builds on an earlier international conference on Inter-linkages: Synergies and Coordination Between MEAs held in July 1999 in Tokyo, Japan.

The UNU and its partners are seeking ways to promote a more integrated and comprehensive approach to MEA negotiation and implementation, moving from overarching principles for developing synergies, to on-the-ground activities and case studies. The goal of this meeting was to examine the impacts of environmental degradation at both the national and regional level, and to aid in the formulation of holistic approaches to environmental governance, particularly through identification of lessons based on existing experience and the development of "tool-kits" for future work. The Consultation's specific objectives included: increasing awareness of the need for synergistic approaches and coordination among MEAs at the regional level; reviewing and evaluating existing regional programmes, activities and frameworks related to synergies and coordination among MEAs; identifying and exploring opportunities and entry points for inter-linkages through natural ecosystems and organizational structures; and identifying and examining potential new frameworks for linking related MEAs. The output of the Consultation included a series of recommendations and proposed case studies based on discussions held in plenary sessions and four working groups.

**REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE**

On the first day of the Consultation, participants convened in a Plenary session to hear opening remarks and a keynote address. This was followed by a panel discussion on current activities, case studies and projects related to inter-linkages. Four working groups were then

convened to address: national and regional approaches; multi-stakeholder partnership and participation; a case study for the Pacific Islands; and a case study for the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN). The working groups produced recommendations based on these discussions, which were presented and discussed in a closing Plenary on the second day. The following is a summary of the proceedings of the conference, with an emphasis on the recommendations resulting from the working group discussions.

**OPENING PLENARY**

Philip Mathews, Assistant Director-General of ISIS, extended a warm welcome to participants. Emphasizing that ISIS is honored to be associated with environmental issues at all levels, he noted that collaboration by the many organizations involved in this process shows that this Consultation is a good example of inter-linkages at work. He stressed a common responsibility to nurture and protect the environment and said that environmental degradation is not accidental but is caused by our own actions. Mathews noted the proliferation of MEAs and that translating such agreements into action is sometimes fraught with difficulty, including overlaps, contradictions and disagreements. He called for a holistic approach and highlighted questions for the meeting including whether there is a safer path to a better world. He concluded by wishing participants a pleasurable stay and a fruitful meeting.

Raman Letchumanan, Assistant Director for Environment of the ASEAN Secretariat, noted that terms such as synergies and coordination are now entering the lexicon of environment and development, joining such keywords as sustainable development and integrative planning. He highlighted that while activities at the national level have been focusing on such integrative and holistic planning, trends in the development of MEAs have been moving in the opposite direction towards a more dissected approach to the environment. Letchumanan reviewed the evolution of some MEAs, including: the focus of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance on a particular ecosystem; the focus of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) on species conservation and management; and finally the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which includes genetic diversity. He highlighted the complexity of the current system of implementing MEAs at the national level noting that the process of ratification and designating relevant focal points, implementing agencies, coordinating mechanisms and activities to fulfill MEA obligations is a daunting task.

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Kazuhiko Takemoto, Counselor, Ministry of the Environment, Japan, welcomed participants and expressed satisfaction with the workshop's high level of attendance. He highlighted UNU's organization of the 1999 inter-linkages conference in Tokyo and noted its objective of effective environmental management through development of integrated mechanisms. He cited text on institutional frameworks from a UN General Assembly Rio+5 document that stresses the importance of inter-linkages. Takemoto indicated his government's support for the inter-linkages initiative as a result of this. He highlighted the meeting's promotion of a regional approach as this is seen as one of the most promising means of revising environmental governance frameworks. He also stressed the importance of making a contribution to the World Summit for Sustainable Development (Rio+10) and indicated the meeting could produce insightful outcomes for further steps in this regard.

Zakri Hamid, Director of the UNU's Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS), noted that with over 200 environmental agreements at the international and regional levels, and the increasing awareness of the linkages between environmental issues such as biodiversity, land degradation, deforestation and climate change, the need to undertake synergistic efforts to address environmental issues is more important than ever. He added that the aim of the concept of inter-linkages is to focus greater attention on the connections between ecosystems and social action, and to enhance the cohesiveness among institutions addressing environment and development issues. He noted that the concept of inter-linkages provides one strategy to address the sustainable development goals, by addressing scientific issues, policy planning and implementation at the international, regional, national and local levels. He noted UNU's activities in the area starting with the 1999 inter-linkages conference, which focused on areas for improved coordination, including capacity building, scientific assessments, finance and institutional arrangements. He highlighted subsequent work with MEA secretariats and relevant inter-governmental agencies with a focus of providing input into Rio+10.

The Honourable Law Hieng Ding, Minister of Science, Technology and the Environment, Malaysia, delivered the keynote address, welcoming all participants and wishing them a fruitful and memorable stay. He underscored the complexity of issues addressed by MEAs and noted that proliferation of such agreements has caused overlaps and inconsistencies. Emphasizing the importance that Malaysia attaches to environmental governance, he noted that the country is currently working to address relevant synergies in the development of new legislation on biosafety. Noting Malaysia's experiences and frustrations with overlapping laws and regulations, he stressed that such overlaps can lead to wasted resources and conflict. He stressed that Malaysia views overlaps seriously and that it has taken counteracting steps, which include amending its constitution. Law Hieng Ding noted that, given the number of MEAs, it will be impossible to avoid some of these duplications. In light of these factors he commended the Consultation's purpose and said that, in spite of obstacles to Agenda 21's implementation, Malaysia remains committed to regional and international cooperation. He expressed his wish that the workshop will be an effective platform for producing recommendations to Rio+10 leading to the development of synergies in implementing MEAs. He then officially opened the Consultation.

**PANEL DISCUSSION ON CURRENT ACTIVITIES, CASE STUDIES AND PROJECTS:** Jerry Velasquez, UNU/Global Environment Information Centre, introduced the UNU Inter-linkages Initiative, a three year program designed to provide input into Rio+10. He noted that the Initiative was launched with the first international inter-linkages conference in 1999, which focused on: scientific mechanisms, finance, issues management, information harmonization and institutions. He

highlighted the Initiative's goal to improve understanding of inter-linkages among MEAs, with specific objectives to: develop the concept's understanding and demonstrate its operationalization; promote stakeholder awareness; and promote implementation of MEA inter-linkages at the international, regional and national levels. He reviewed the Initiative's framework, which includes three components: framework building; capacity building; and information dissemination. The aim of framework building is to develop model implementation frameworks at the regional and national levels, including a research element focusing on scientific mechanisms (e.g., the precautionary principle), financing (e.g., bilateral and multilateral funding mechanisms), issue management (e.g., ozone and climate change, and biosafety) and institutions (e.g., international institutional reform and the proposed World Environment Court). The capacity building component focuses on training workshops and a programme to improve developing countries' negotiating capacity. The information dissemination component includes the development of publications and policy briefs available through the Initiative's web portal (<http://www.interlinkages.net>). He finally reviewed the Initiative's other efforts in developing regional and national approaches to inter-linkages, including a review of national implementation of the Rio Conventions, case studies of the Pacific Islands and ASEAN region, and the development of replicable regional and national frameworks.

Walter Reid, Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, highlighted the features of the Assessment in addressing the interlinked assessment needs of MEAs. Explaining its origins, he highlighted the effectiveness of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in ensuring access to sound science, and the subsequent need and user-demand for an assessment mechanism in global environmental processes other than climate change. He said the mechanism would have to serve multiple users and noted the decision to call it the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. He explained, *inter alia*, that it: is a four-year international assessment of scientific knowledge; focuses on food, water, health and other important social issues; adopts a multi-scale analysis; is demand driven; and has the UN Secretary-General's support. In summary, he said the Assessment is an example of implementing inter-linkages and expressed hope that it will contribute to an inter-linkages approach.

Peter Gilruth, UNDP Office to Combat Desertification and Drought, presented UNDP's work on synergies, including its role as an Implementing Agency of the Global Environment Facility (GEF). He reviewed a workshop on synergies held in Sede Boqer, Israel, in 1997, which focused on themes of institutions, policy and planning, information and reporting, and capacity building. The workshop had highlighted: horizontal tensions between national ministries and vertical tensions in mediating top-down and bottom-up approaches, and the need to develop data/information policies and a systems approach to identify common data needs, sources and gaps. He also reviewed the results of a UNDP survey of MEA National Focal Points (NFPs), which: noted the multiple responsibilities of NFPs and the significant time devoted to reporting responsibilities, thereby reducing time for policy implementation; revealed a tension between benefits of synergies accruing to the national institution, and the costs and demands of such work falling upon individual NFPs; identified difficulties in prioritizing tasks and the need for a formal mechanism to integrate MEA obligations into national development plans; and noted shortages of information and appropriate equipment in developing countries. He concluded with a number of recommendations, including: promoting synergies through institutional, policy planning and/or information management approaches; developing skills in change management, negotiation, analysis and strategic planning; sustaining training and capacity building efforts; and improving in-country political support and pro-active international support for NFPs.

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Lars Nordberg, UN Economic Commission of Europe (ECE) and the Secretariat of the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, discussed inter-linkages between ECE MEAs and possible synergies to be derived from further cooperation. He highlighted his former work with the ECE and the ECE's background and constitution. Nordberg reviewed the 13 MEAs within the ECE and said this was a good starting point to talk about inter-linkages. He elaborated on the following major issues addressed at the national, intergovernmental and inter-secretariat level: information; finance; issue management; scientific mechanisms; institutional aspects; and outreach. Nordberg stressed that synergies can be gained by exploiting potential for cooperation where there is a natural basis for this. In this regard, he said it is better to be realistic rather than idealistic. He added his support for a regional approach, saying that this has significant advantages and could be of benefit in the global context.

Lal Kurukulasuriya, UN Environment Programme (UNEP), highlighted UNEP's mandate and activities regarding the promotion of environmental inter-linkages, as detailed in Agenda 21, UN General Assembly resolutions and decisions of UNEP's Governing Council. He emphasized that promoting synergies requires attention to areas of substance, procedures and the evolution of environmental norms and mechanisms. He highlighted UNEP's work in a number of programme areas, including: environmental assessment and early warning systems, involving the Global Environmental Outlook; MEA development, involving work in developing MEAs at the international and regional levels; environment and trade, facilitating communication among MEA secretariats with the World Trade Organization (WTO); and capacity building through UNEP's role as a GEF Implementing Agency and the activities of UNEP regional offices. He also highlighted UNEP's work in the Asian region, revitalization of the regional seas programme, facilitation of communication among MEA secretariats, and harmonization of national reporting.

Bulat Yessekin, Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia, spoke on the experiences and problems of the region on the issue of synergies. He noted that Central Asian countries began participating in MEAs just three to five years ago. He said that the basic principles of national environmental action plans include a limited list of priorities and recognition of the need for participation of all stakeholders. He outlined criteria for a range of actions taken and noted examples from Kazakhstan. Yessekin summarized the nature and tasks of the Regional Environmental Centre. He indicated that their approach to MEAs was divided by the "What?" (e.g. climate, biodiversity, ozone) and the "How?" (e.g. public participation, environmental impact assessments, economic tools). Regarding the main obstacles to synergies, he identified inadequate programmes from donors, inadequate structures at the global level, and the absence of links between private investments at the local level and global environmental benefits. He also stressed the need for using one methodology to produce a programme for promoting MEA synergies.

During the ensuing discussion, one participant advised taking care that promotion of synergies among MEAs does not fundamentally change or compromise their objectives or alternatively divert attention and funds from one MEA to another. She also cautioned against a tendency to subordinate MEAs to the WTO by ensuring their compliance to international trade rules. One participant noted that synergies should not be pursued for their own sake, but instead attention should focus on where synergies would be advantageous and effective and not counter-productive. A representative of an MEA secretariat stressed the need for cooperation and coordination among MEAs to overcome lack of resources and staff power. Responding to one speaker's concern that

the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment would focus on environmental problems of countries and not solutions, Reid responded that the Assessment would address the ecosystem and not the country level.

### WORKING GROUPS

Four working groups met during the afternoon of Monday, 26 February, and the morning and early afternoon of Tuesday, 27 February. The reports of their findings and recommendations, as summarized below, were presented to the Plenary on Tuesday afternoon.

**NATIONAL AND REGIONAL APPROACHES:** The objective of this working group, chaired by Walter Reid, Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, was to examine key issues faced by regional organizations and national governments regarding synergies in MEA implementation. Participants were requested to address: the pros and cons of synergistic efforts between MEAs at the regional and national levels; issues that could be addressed by synergistic efforts at the regional and national levels; and challenges faced by regional and national organizations during the negotiation and implementation of MEAs. Outputs were to include: input to the Rio+10 process; recommendations contributing to the creation of frameworks for synergistic MEA implementation at the regional and national levels; and ideas and guidance for future case studies.

Carlene Van Toen, UNU, presented a survey on promoting synergies using interviews with delegates to the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific in September 2000. Regarding institutional arrangements, Van Toen highlighted conflicts, especially in communications and information flow, within countries where national agencies responsible for negotiating MEAs differ from those responsible for implementation. Regarding communication and information dissemination, she highlighted widespread communication among NFPs, generally relating to the preparation of national reports. She recommended increased communication during the development of national plans and strategies, and promotion of shared databases. Regarding identification and implementation of inter-linkages, she highlighted that efforts to foster synergies are increasing, mostly through projects that fulfill more than one MEA obligation. She noted that such activities are often not encouraged in developing countries, since they can receive more funding for piecemeal projects than for a single, larger programme. She also noted that those surveyed identified the national level as the most appropriate to address synergies, as the local level lacks the capacity to develop synergies. She highlighted obstacles regarding limited financial resources and lack of skilled personnel and support from decision-makers. Regarding capacity building, she highlighted insufficient training opportunities and a lack of education campaigns targeting media outlets.

Rizalino Malabed, UNU, presented on the ecosystem approach as a socio-ecological approach to natural and human systems. He started by reviewing the concept of the ecosystem approach as defined in the CBD, emphasizing its dynamic, complex, non-linear, hierarchical and nested nature. He noted that it is an integrated approach taking a long-term perspective that includes social issues and maintains the productive potential of the ecosystem. He stated that social institutions should reflect the systemic characteristics of ecosystems and environmental problems. Regarding ecosystems, he noted the need to assess and evaluate such ecosystems to arrive at their potentials, while from the institutional perspective, he underlined the need to look at governance structures and relevant institutions to identify a social vision and objectives. Consideration of such ecosystem potential and the social vision/objectives could then contribute to the construction of particular scenarios and the development of a socio-ecological vision and plan. This could be operationalized through an adaptive implementation strategy covering governance, monitoring and management issues.

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Feedback on such implementation would then be fed back into assessments at the ecosystem and institutional level. He noted that the socio-ecological approach extends the concept of sustainable development beyond economic development and environmental protection to the sustainability of human and natural systems.

Mohanty Choudhury Rudra, UNEP, highlighted UNEP's regional approach to environmental assessment at the global, regional, sub-regional and national levels. He reviewed three primary supporting activities: capacity building (e.g. geographic information systems); assessments and reporting (e.g. state of the environment reports); and data management (e.g. core data sets). He highlighted a framework for environmental assessment moving from data (bio-physical and socio-economic data) to information (indicators and state of the environment reports) to decision-making (legislation and action plans). He reviewed the objectives of UNEP's Global Environmental Outlook, including: strengthening global environmental assessment processes; identifying global issues and their root causes; highlighting particular issues for policy action; establishing integrated, model-based analysis and assessment procedures; and supporting international policy dialogues on responses to pressures hampering sustainable development. Rudra then presented an example of UNEP's work on modeling air pollution and sulfur dioxide emissions in Asia with corresponding efforts to: develop baseline studies and databases; establish an air pollution network; develop models, standards and methodologies; and, in the long-term, establish a legal framework.

During the ensuing discussion, participants addressed how to deal with ecosystems intersecting national boundaries and thereby different political and social systems. In response to one comment that increased attention to synergies might result in more meetings for already overloaded NFPs, Van Toen emphasized the need to focus on specific and limited areas of synergy.

Olivier Jalbert, CBD Secretariat, presented the CBD's experience on synergies and coordination with other MEAs. He highlighted examples of such work under the CBD's five thematic ecosystem areas, including, *inter alia*:

- Arid, semi-arid and sub-humid areas – collaboration with the Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought (CCD) on a joint work programme;
- Inland waters and marine/coastal biodiversity – collaboration with the Ramsar Secretariat on a joint work programme, as well as work with secretariats of the regional seas conventions, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), CITES, and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS);
- Coral bleaching – anticipated cooperation with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); and
- Forest biodiversity – discussions and possible cooperation with the UNFCCC Secretariat, as well as the Center for International Forest Research, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests, the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), UNDP, UNEP and the World Bank.

He also reviewed collaborative efforts regarding cross-cutting issues of alien species, taxonomy, scientific assessments, national reporting, access and benefit-sharing, and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. He noted an extensive degree of cooperation among MEA secretariats at the institutional level in response to the requests of MEA governing bodies. Jalbert highlighted the challenge to implement such inter-linkages at the national level. He also noted potential regional and sub-regional issues such as the ecosystem approach, alien species, impact assessments and biosafety. He concluded by stressing the need for

appropriate institutional mechanisms to allow for such cooperation, citing the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP), the ASEAN Secretariat and UNEP regional offices as examples.

Pavel Suian, Secretariat of the Basel Convention on the Control of the Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, highlighted the Convention's objectives to reduce the generation of hazardous waste, contribute to its sound management and control transboundary movements. He noted that hazardous waste is a lower priority among environmental issues, and said that this has translated into fewer resources and that there is thus a need to cooperate with other relevant organizations and processes. In this regard, Suian highlighted efforts involving, *inter alia*, the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and its Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, UNEP and its regional offices, UNDP, the World Bank, the Convention for Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, SPREP, Interpol, the International Maritime Organization, the Organization for Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the UN Industrial Development Organization, and the UN economic commissions. He specified two types of activity: 1) work with agreements with similar provisions or mandates regarding hazardous waste (e.g. the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade (PIC) and the Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)); and 2) collaboration on implementation issues common to non-hazardous waste organizations or agreements (e.g. the prevention and control of illegal trade, and enforcement).

The ensuing discussion addressed collaboration with regional institutions and the GEF to focus on implementation issues.

Rebecca D'Cruz, for the Bureau of the Ramsar Convention, provided a brief overview of the Convention, which is the only MEA dedicated to a particular ecosystem type. She noted that the Convention includes a worldwide network of 1023 Ramsar sites and has memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with the CBD, CMS, CCD, the World Heritage Convention, the Cartagena and Barcelona Regional Seas Conventions and the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River, as well as a number of international organizations, including, *inter alia*, IUCN, Wetlands International, Birdlife International, the Nature Conservancy, and UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme. D'Cruz highlighted other initiatives on harmonizing national reporting and information sharing, as well as planned initiatives for a joint demonstration project, a directory of significant wetlands and additional joint work plans. She noted that the Ramsar Convention's joint work plans have been useful for enhancing linkages at the global level, but require additional work to engender concrete action at the national level. She also emphasized the need for mechanisms to promote cooperation between NFPs of different conventions, and the heavy burden of reporting requirements, which detract implementation efforts. She closed by calling for a study of the prospects for synergies and existing bottlenecks, and formulation of a longer-term plan for achieving synergies among MEAs.

Taej Mundkur, Wetlands International, noted the organization's mission to sustain and restore wetlands, their resources and biodiversity through research, information exchange and conservation activities. He highlighted partnerships and activities with the Ramsar Convention, CMS and CBD. Mundkur then presented two case studies. The first case study on an inventory of Asian wetlands is designed to: provide core data on wetlands to support MEAs; update information on wetlands of national and international importance; assess trends in wetland status; disseminate analyses; and implement integrated training courses. He highlighted the project's relevance to the CBD, CCD, CMS, UNFCCC and Ramsar Convention. The second case study on the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy provides: an over-

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view of major threats; the status of endangered species; an overview of major waterbird flyways; and themes regarding conservation of species and habitats, research and monitoring, education and training, information and awareness, and policy and legislation. He noted the strategy's relevance to the CBD, CMS and Ramsar Convention. He reviewed other regional initiatives and stressed the need for different stakeholders to work together, increased public and media interest, and applied research. He concluded by stating that: NGOs require additional commitments to work with MEAs; demonstration projects need to show practical benefits; and reduction of costs and maximization of benefits should be pursued.

Guillermo Acuna, UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), reviewed the relevance of activities within the Latin American and Caribbean region for inter-linkages and MEA synergies. Addressing the national context, he noted that the countries of the region generally have strong participation in MEAs, although strong compliance has not necessarily occurred given the lack of institutional capacity. He stated that there are few national efforts to identify synergies between MEAs as significant difficulties are faced simply in the implementation of individual agreements. At the sub-regional level, he noted increased trade and integration agreements, and a more proactive approach to environment and sustainable development issues. He also stated that the Caribbean sub-region has been more committed to making efforts to coordinate MEA implementation, especially within the context of the Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States (SIDS). He reviewed ECLAC's efforts to strengthen national, sub-regional and regional institutional capacities and its work in the MERCOSUR Trade Agreement and the Andean Community Nations. In conclusion, he recommended that: ECLAC and other regional mechanisms be used to provide analyses of synergies and MEA coordination in their reports for Rio+10; sub-regional trade agreements provide an opportunity to promote inter-linkages; and different actors involved in implementing MEAs address inter-linkages in their work programmes.

Faisal Parish, Global Environment Centre, presented an overview of the River Basin Initiative on integrating wetlands, biodiversity and river basin management. He highlighted key issues of concern for rivers and their ecosystems, including, ecosystem degradation, depletion of natural resources, water shortages, increased flooding, loss of fisheries, pollution, loss of biodiversity, loss of livelihood for local communities and increased carbon emissions. He noted that the Initiative's goal is to establish a network to share information and link activities regarding the integrated management of biodiversity, wetlands and river basins. He highlighted a number of objectives, including, *inter alia*: promoting integrated river basin management with an ecosystem approach; strengthening cross-sectoral dialogue, especially between water/land use and conservation sectors; and supporting implementation of decisions under the CBD, Ramsar Convention and the Hague Ministerial Conference on Water. He reviewed the Initiative's coordination and management structures, as well as the different phases in its establishment. He then noted possible international partners, such as UNEP, UNESCO, FAO, WWF, IUCN, Wetlands International and others. Regional, national and local partners could include river basin or regional institutions, CBD and/or Ramsar Convention focal points and agencies, specialized agencies and NGOs, which could share information and support implementation activities, especially through the development of specific projects.

Osmane Laye, UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), noted a number of regional and international agreements relevant to African countries with specific regard to biodiversity, climate change, desertification and hazardous wastes. He stressed the need to improve the capacity of African negotiators if they are to participate effectively in

MEA negotiations. He highlighted the work of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, as well as a coordinating mechanism under the CCD between the African and the Latin American and Caribbean regions. Laye also noted ECA work on natural resources, soil and land degradation, and desertification, while highlighting potential areas of collaboration with the three Rio agreements.

**Recommendations:** Within its discussions, the working group agreed on a number of points and recommendations. The group recognized that extensive inter-linkages and incentives now exist at the regional and global levels for coordinating work among MEA secretariats. Programmatic inter-linkages at the global and regional scales include data and information (e.g. assessment activities), capacity building (e.g. efforts by UNDP and UNEP) and work by regional bodies (e.g. ASEAN, ECLAC, ECA and ECE). The group noted significant challenges at the national level, including lack of government capacity, separation of responsibility for MEA negotiation and implementation, and lack of data and information. The group identified a number of core principles stating that inter-linkages should, *inter alia*: be in the national interest and value-added; encompass economic, social and environmental dimensions; involve related, non-environmental agreements, such as trade agreements, Interpol and international customs organizations; and be tailored to different levels (global, regional and national) and stages (planning, implementation and monitoring).

The group produced several recommendations, including, *inter alia*: improved access to data and information exchange, and harmonization of data management systems; work on MEA inter-linkages at the policy, strategy and planning stages; capacity building for negotiating, conflict resolution and reporting; financing to support and create incentives for promoting inter-linkages at the national level; improved communications and outreach, especially regarding MEAs' roles in national development; promotion of inter-linkages with non-MEAs, such as the WTO; promotion of inter-linkages among regions; and recognition of civil society and private sector contributions. The group proposed undertaking pilot activities focusing on key sites and issues, as well as case studies on: the costs and benefits of implementing MEAs; barriers to national efforts to create inter-linkages; the design of relevant financial mechanisms; and preparation of a "biodiversity, climate, wetlands and sustainable development" national strategy. The group also recommended that the UN regional economic commissions address synergies in their progress reports to Rio+10 and that an MEA task force explore harmonization of methodologies for national strategies and action plans.

**MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION:** This working group, chaired by Hari Srinivas, UNU, examined the role that different stakeholders play in successful implementation of environmental conventions. Discussions focused on areas that may benefit from improvements in awareness, participation and partnership development, and challenges faced by civil society, governments and industry. Specific discussions included addressing roles of major groups in informing and assisting MEA processes, examining existing networks and information management systems, and exploring links between local actions and global impacts. The workshop's projected outputs were input into Rio+10, recommendations for better partnership between multiple stakeholders in MEA implementation and providing a substantial starting point for the case studies to be launched after the meeting.

Introducing the workshop, Srinivas stressed that the global message must be brought down to community level and underscored the need for a ground-up view. He stressed that capacities must be built at the local level if MEAs are to function.

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Brook Boyer, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), spoke on institutional coordination, multi-stakeholder participation and implementation of MEAs. He noted that institutional arrangements for implementing MEAs are not well developed and said the key to fulfilling MEA obligations is marrying institutional coordination with multi-stakeholder participation. Boyer highlighted a general deficiency of multi-stakeholder representation in coordinating bodies. He described the benefits of multi-stakeholder institutional arrangements as being: a venue for pluralistic inputs and problem solving; a framework to integrate responses and coordinate MEAs; and a place where global meets local. Boyer outlined his findings on institutional coordination and multi-stakeholder participation in Malaysia and Thailand, which included low multi-stakeholder participation and a sector-based approach with little cross-sectoral or integrated planning. He noted that very few projects and coordinated activities in the two countries link MEAs in national implementation. Highlighting his findings and recommendations, Boyer noted, *inter alia*, that: institutional coordination relating to MEA implementation suffers from fragmented structures and sector-specific management; a lack of capacity and awareness at the national and sub-national levels of government continues to be a significant obstacle for MEA implementation; and governments should investigate ways to enhance Internet sites to promote more direct and regular interaction with multi-stakeholder groups.

Responding to a question on whether to start synergies at the national or international level, Boyer advocated starting at the national and sub-national level, and stressed the need to concentrate on moving from the abstract idea of inter-linkages to the concrete. One participant underscored taking into account the constitutional, federal and administrative constraints on progress that may exist.

Holger Liptow, German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), addressed synergies and coordination in German Technical Cooperation. He introduced GTZ and highlighted convention projects on technical cooperation. He noted difficulties experienced in mainstreaming issues and highlighted synergies identified in projects and initiatives in Mauritania, Paraguay and China. Liptow identified their general aims in MEA projects as being: greater attention through synergies; use of a holistic approach; assistance in institutional strengthening; and identification of new approaches to reactivate German interest in environmental issues. On concrete actions taken, he identified: regular internal convention meetings; exhibits at environmental fairs; a presentation to the public at EXPO-2000 in Hannover, Germany; common presentations and discussions at GTZ internal expert meetings; and preparation of one publication on all MEAs. He noted relevant German studies undertaken, as well as a new report of the German Advisory Council on Global Change on interaction between global environmental problems and conventions, and an ongoing Federal Environment Office study on effects of biological units on the climate system. In conclusion, he noted that: there are some inter-linkages experiences in German Technical Cooperation among selected projects; MEA projects are rapidly improving in their coordination and common information activities; and demand and political pressure to develop more synergetic actions among MEAs is increasing.

In discussions, regarding a question on how economic demands are addressed, Liptow responded that there was a need to use money efficiently and effectively. On the difficulty of different conventions having different constituencies and the need to stimulate participation and ratification, Liptow said this should be done at the political level, not the project level, and cautioned that inter-linkages should not be given undue emphasis given capacity limitations. On what role GTZ has in educating the public on the global nature of the problem, Liptow stressed that people must be given a sense of ownership of the problem.

Hari Srinivas, UNU, spoke on MEAs and the urban arena in localizing the global environmental agenda. He noted that cities now have a plethora of tools and norms to tackle local and environmental goals and objectives. He said cities need to adopt the "G.E.T" urban formula addressing governance, education and technology, and that this formula must run parallel with a toolbox of measures available for environmental action at the local level. He highlighted the MEA-Urban link, which calls for intrinsic institutional linkages. Srinivas described elements of a plan of action and outlined information management issues that can be synergistically linked with the global environment. He identified four environmental challenges for cities: using global trends to develop the local environment; developing partnerships among all local actors; proactively transferring knowledge on local practices; and conducting scientific research and capacity building incorporating a strong local dimension.

During the ensuing discussion, Srinivas responded to a question on how to build institutional arrangements to meet challenges. He stated that the first step is internal dialogue at the city level and then establishment of linkages with the national and regional levels. On the problem of resource constraints and the difficulty of multiple entry points, Srinivas observed that individuals often perceive global environment problems as beyond their influence and give it a low priority. He highlighted the need to integrate environmental issues in projects at the local level and that emotional dimensions can be exploited to link everyday life with the environment. Regarding a comment on lack of trust among local actors, Srinivas called for a framework to understand and coordinate contributions made at the local level. He noted a lack of understanding of the local dimension in MEA discussions and, at the city level, a lack of responsibility for global environmental problems.

Willem Wijnstekers, CITES Secretariat, gave a presentation on the CITES experience. He noted the 50/50 ratio of delegates and NGOs attending CITES meetings and the diversity of interests represented. Highlighting a recent CITES paper on synergies with biodiversity related MEAs, Wijnstekers stressed the need for synergies, cooperation and linkages in the CITES framework, making international wildlife trade sustainable, and promotion of a regional approach. As an example of synergies in practice, he described a CITES/Basel Convention initiative on training border officers and customs agents in product identification. He noted examples of implementation at the local level, including the case of villagers offsetting crop losses caused by elephants, by selling elephant hunting permits and participating in elephant quota setting. Wijnstekers also pointed out the need to increase the number of developing country NGOs within CITES discussions.

Honorable Salleh Mohd Nor, Malaysian Nature Society (MNS), presented on the NGO perspective. He highlighted MNS's role and noted its success in raising awareness and creating national parks. He said there are linkages between MEAs and grassroots organizations, but that the question is whether international agencies recognize the role of grassroots organizations and how can they help them better perform their role? He underscored that grassroots organizations translate MEA obligations into reality on the ground. He advocated a resolution inviting MEAs to support local and national NGOs, especially grassroots organizations, since they are ultimately the test of MEAs' success.

One participant highlighted UNDP's country-driven Small Grants Programme as an example of support and stressed the need for a bottom-up approach. Regarding a comment on international NGOs potentially pressurizing local NGOs, Nor stressed adopting a spirit of cooperation given the magnitude of the challenge and said local NGOs must not be the tool of large NGOs. He added that knowledge and information are critical for decision making at both the grassroots and policy level. A participant cautioned not to forget that States are central players and said that there are examples of best practices, which should be



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replicated. An MEA secretariat representative underscored not confusing NGO roles, saying local NGOs can perform their role by successfully getting their message to the government who can then represent them internationally. He also emphasized the considerable financial support given to NGOs for attendance at MEA meetings. Nor agreed their influence should be at the ground level but stressed that their capacity needs strengthening.

Jaime Aparicio, Organization of American States, highlighted the background and development of the Summit of the Americas on sustainable development. He noted the framework and development of the Plan of Action for the Sustainable Development of the Americas, and outlined elements of its follow-up participation strategy. He said that, at the multilateral political level, there is a common vision in the Americas, but that on-the-ground results are limited. As reasons he cited, *inter alia*, too many initiatives and their lack of integration, lack of trust in NGOs, limited resources, and the lack of a participative mechanism.

Ricardo Favis, UNESCO, described how UNESCO addresses the protection of cultural and natural heritage and stressed that their understanding of "environment" includes its indigenous inhabitants. He noted that UNESCO supports traditional resource management techniques reinforced by external techniques. Favis stressed that implementing MEAs at the grassroots level is ineffective where local communities have not been consulted and made aware of the significance of grassroots implementation. He also noted that imported techniques of resource management can conflict with local techniques and highlighted efforts to develop eco-tourism to improve the lives of indigenous people.

James Kulleh, Sarawak Shell, presented an industry perspective. He said industry will support MEAs at the local level but the process must be market-driven. He said it must be voluntary and self-regulated and that with proper economic incentives industry can prioritize its MEA objectives. He noted that industry has the capacity and capability to help in drafting and implementing MEAs.

**Recommendations:** In its discussion and synthesis of the issues, the group found, *inter alia*, that: environmental issues are complex and difficult to prioritize; multi-stakeholder participation is limited and accordingly there is a need to encourage and develop proper modalities, legislative support and active use of the Internet; and global and MEA objectives are not included in local projects and programmes. The group identified a need for: projects and programmes specifically targeting synergies; a clear understanding of local needs and priorities; and increased visibility and capacities of local and national NGOs at the global level. It recommended building a framework for action plans but with flexibility to include local variations, and creating inventories of resources and of plans, projects and programmes that broadly meet MEA objectives. It found that integrated community development is critical and advocated empowerment of the community, especially with sustainable livelihoods.

The group recommended broadening the boundaries of participation and indicated different dimensions of participation. It advocated three-way networking among business and industry, local governments, and NGOs and the local community. There should then be linkages with other local levels and a linking up the chain to national governments and MEAs. Given strong global/national links compared with weak national/local links, the group advocated strengthening partnerships and networking at the local level and then feeding up to the national and global level. It also identified a need to clarify the link between global MEAs (processes and organizations) and local concerns and capacities. In this regard, Agenda 21 and local Agenda 21 linkages were examples. The group produced three key messages: the need to keep in mind the cyclical links between global environmental problems and their impli-

cations at the local level; the need to create an environment to facilitate subsidiarity of decision-making, build capacities and incentives, raise awareness, and change lifestyles; and the need for policies and programmes to take the local level into account, incorporating strong elements of participation and partnership that is translated into concrete action and outcomes.

**OVERVIEW OF CASE STUDIES:** Prior to discussions under the Working Groups on the Pacific Islands and ASEAN Case Studies, a general presentation was made regarding the potential framework, methodology and subject matter of the case study proposals to be developed.

Bradnee Chambers, UNU/IAS, provided an overview of the possible elements of a framework and methodology for the development of case studies on the Pacific Islands and the ASEAN region. He highlighted the need for such case studies, noting the piecemeal and decentralized nature of approaches to MEA implementation at the international level, uncertainty regarding the degree of coordination and synergies at the national level, opportunities to strengthen MEA implementation at all levels and benefits for cost-effectiveness. He highlighted possible MEAs and global environmental issues, including climate change, biodiversity, desertification, ozone, forests, marine ecosystems and freshwater, noting that such issue areas: address aspects of both environment and development; represent the most serious global and local threats; and also allow for strong global-local linkages. He highlighted climate change as an example with linkages to hydrological cycles, drylands, drought, desertification, forests, agricultural conversion and ozone depletion. He noted the need to compare the function, components and characteristics of the relevant MEAs. Chambers addressed common obligations in MEAs, such as cooperation with other MEAs, technology transfer, capacity building, training and education, research and public awareness. He also noted common implementing components of MEAs, including, *inter alia*: NFPs and national coordination committees; national policy frameworks; monitoring, data collection and reporting; financing; and market mechanisms. He indicated that a possible methodology could identify a cluster of inter-related MEAs and elements of implementation for examination, survey areas of implementation at the national level and regional and bilateral agreements and mechanisms, and compare synergies across countries and issues. He also stated that the criteria for establishing a framework for a case study could address national priorities, geophysical circumstances, financing, environmental priorities and levels of technology.

During the ensuing discussion, some participants noted that identifying national priorities and needs has to be the first step, before attempting to cluster related MEA obligations. Another participant noted that countries are at different stages of implementing MEA obligations and stressed the need to consider the most appropriate geographic level at which to start approaching the issue of synergies. It was explained that the case studies should be conducted over a six month period from March to August 2001, in order to submit them for consideration in the UN Secretary General's report to Rio+10.

**PACIFIC ISLANDS CASE STUDY:** This group, chaired by Peter Gilruth, UNDP, explored issues relevant to the types of synergistic measures undertaken when implementing MEAs in Pacific Island countries and within the region. Initial discussions focused on identification of existing regional conventions, agreements and initiatives, and related synergistic efforts undertaken during their negotiation and implementation. Subsequent discussions focused on regional issues that may benefit from the development of synergistic efforts and practical actions to implement them. Proposed issues for attention were the linkages between regional and global conventions on: the conservation of nature (Convention on Conservation of Nature in the South Pacific Region (Apia Convention) and CBD); protection of natural resources and envi-

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ronment (Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and the Environment of the South Pacific Region (SPREP Convention), and CBD); and hazardous waste-related conventions (the Basel Convention and the Convention to Ban the Importation into Forum Island Countries of Hazardous and Radioactive Waste and to Control the Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within the South Pacific Region (Waigani Convention)). Anticipated outputs for the group were the launch of a Pacific Islands case study, proposed to be completed by August 2001, input to Rio+10, and the possibility of replication in other regions.

Seema Deo, and Jacques Mougeot, SPREP, gave a presentation on management of hazardous waste in the Pacific Region. Deo highlighted SPREP's background and membership and noted its programmes on nature conservation, climate change and variability, pollution prevention, and economic development. She noted that SPREP's regional conventions are: the Apia Convention, the Waigani Convention, and the SPREP Convention and Protocols addressing protection of the South Pacific's natural resources and environment. Mougeot advised that the region's pollution prevention issues are disposal of solid waste, liquid wastes, sewage disposal, management of toxic substances and pollution from shipping. He highlighted SPREP's programmes and projects regarding hazardous waste, including a project on persistent organic pollutants in Pacific Island Countries. Mougeot noted elements of cooperation among Parties and international organizations, linkages with relevant conventions, and institutional linkages with the Basel Convention, UNEP Chemicals and the FAO. He also highlighted the Guam Environment Ministers' Forum Statement on hazardous wastes.

Russell Howorth, South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC), referred to the Guam statement, noting that an issue is viewed as regionally important when two or more countries share a problem and that regional organizations then share the work to address that problem. He highlighted SOPAC's organizational focus on resources, environment, utilities, disaster management, and information, communications and technology. He said SOPAC is process-driven and noted the elements of their support to SPREP. He alluded to difficulties in determining the scale of an ecosystem and said their work on the environment vulnerability index issue reinforced the concern that there will be limitations to conventions' success until national capacities in data collection are improved.

I'o A. Tuakeu-Lindsay, the Cook Islands, presented an overview of the Cook Islands and their role in environmental agreements. She stressed that her government is taking its role in conventions very seriously and noted its intent to develop a more concentrated focus on environmental conventions. She noted that solid waste management is a priority issue for the country. She said the Cook Islands will have an agency to deal with national interests but need to strengthen their involvement in regional and international negotiations. She noted a proactive approach in this regard, including a recent workshop on access and benefit sharing and preparation of legislation on bio-prospecting. Tuakeu-Lindsay highlighted lack of funding and technical skills, and inconsistency of representation at the regional and international level. She said that, in spite of these factors, much had been achieved administratively and that strides were being made in the technical area.

In group discussions, Chair Gilruth noted that the lack of human resources can provide an advantage in terms of synergy, since synergy is inherently created. Tuakeu-Lindsay observed that the lack of specialists for each area was a difficulty. Regarding a question on sharing projects among Pacific Islands, she noted that a review has been done and that benefits are shared among Pacific sub-regions. A participant stressed the large differences amongst the small island countries.

Chad Martino, ESCAP, introduced ESCAP's programme on environment and natural resource development and its activities in relation to environment, energy, space technology applications, and water and mineral resources. He noted ESCAP's focus on poverty alleviation. Regarding recent activities, he highlighted: the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific in September 2000, and the Pacific Sub-regional Consultation Meeting for the Ministerial Conference, held in April 2000. Martino noted ESCAP activities relevant to MEAs in specific issue areas and ESCAP work on promoting sustainable energy in SIDS. Regarding activities for Rio+10, he noted ESCAP's organization of preparatory events with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UNEP to develop a regional platform for the Summit, and ESCAP/UNDP collaboration in organizing a regional forum for Parliamentarians and civil society to solicit inputs into the regional preparatory process.

In conclusion, he stressed ESCAP's role in promoting and framing regional dialogue and cooperation and capacity, and its potential to contribute to inter-linkages through its knowledge of poverty eradication and globalization.

On Tuesday, the group focused on the problems facing Pacific Islands and discussed possible elements of an appropriate case study to be carried out in the limited time available. Participants considered two possible approaches for the case study: a regional approach undertaken by SPREP focusing on the Waigani and Basel Conventions, with the goal of ratification; and a national-based approach using several countries, focusing on assessment of needs and progress. Discussions focused on what could be achieved in the time available, what the value added items would be, the specific goals, the appropriate geographic level, and the appropriate issue focus. Consensus was reached to design the case study with a principal focus on the national level, where there was greatest need to improve understanding.

**Recommendations:** Defining the problem, the group determined that lack or weakness of national policies, legal and institutional arrangements and human resource capabilities are obstacles to effective negotiation, ratification and implementation of MEAs. The solution is to use synergies and linkages that exist among them. The group decided that the case study's goal should be to strengthen national governance structures within negotiation, ratification and implementation of MEAs by using synergies and inter-linkages. The purpose of the case study would be to explore the use of linkages in strengthening national, and if possible regional, governance structures within negotiation, ratification and implementation of MEAs. The objectives of the case study are: assessment of existing national, and if possible regional, legal and institutional frameworks; identification of gaps and obstacles in the use of synergies and inter-linkages between MEAs in the negotiation, ratification and implementation phases; and development of options and solutions. The case study will be a UNU Initiative with SPREP as the focal regional organization. It will involve three countries (to be confirmed): Melanesia – Vanuatu; Polynesia – the Cook Islands; and Micronesia – Palau or the Marshall Islands. It will cover national governance issues, namely: policy priorities, institutional and legal frameworks, financing, scientific mechanisms, capacity building, information and others. It will be within the context of hazardous wastes, including: the Waigani, Basel, POPs, Rotterdam, and SPREP Conventions, along with the CBD and other marine conventions; and conservation and natural resources including the Apia and SPREP Conventions, as well as the CBD. Stakeholders identified were the Basel Convention, civil society, UNU, UNEP regional offices, ESCAP, UNDP/GEF, regional universities, local institutions and other organizations. Expected outputs are for the use of national governments, regional organizations and international organizations. There would also be follow-up activities and recommendations for national, regional and international levels.



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**ASEAN CASE STUDY:** The purpose of this working group, co-chaired by Hajah Rosnani Ibarahim, Department of Environment, Malaysia, and Raman Letchumanan, ASEAN Secretariat, was to examine issues directly related to the types of synergistic efforts used in the implementation of MEAs in the ASEAN region, and how such implementation can be improved. Through the discussion of experiences from ASEAN countries, participants were to develop a potential case study in one or more ASEAN countries. Participants were asked to address: the current status of MEA implementation in ASEAN countries, particularly institutional arrangements and coordinating mechanisms; areas where synergies can benefit from and contribute to effective MEA implementation; the scale of possible synergies in such implementation; and formulation of a framework and selection of a country/countries for the case study. Outputs were to include: launching an ASEAN case study for completion by August 2001; input to Rio+10; and examination of possible replication of lessons in other regions.

Co-chair Letchumanan outlined a matrix that could provide an overview of national efforts, addressing: the status of ratification, using groupings of conventions related to ozone and climate change, chemicals, and conservation and biodiversity; institutional arrangements for each MEA, including NFPs, main implementing agencies, national coordination mechanisms and major activities; and implementation status and challenges.

Pengiran Shamhary bin Pengiran D.P. Mustapha, Brunei, noted that his country is party to the Vienna Convention, Montreal Protocol and CITES. He highlighted the need for MEA secretariats to communicate to non-Parties information on the obligations and benefits of becoming a Party, and highlighted recent national discussions with the CCD Secretariat. He emphasized the need for regional support for such awareness-raising efforts, while noting that this lack of awareness hampers efforts to participate in international negotiations. He further highlighted the potential of developing synergies to improve the efficiency of resource use.

Pao Sophal, Cambodia, noted that his country is party to the UNFCCC, CBD, CITES, Ramsar Convention and the World Heritage Convention, and highlighted the country's efforts to accede to the Montreal Protocol, and the POPs and PIC Conventions. He described the country's institutional coverage of such MEAs under the Departments of Planning and Legal Affairs, Pollution Control, and Nature Conservation and Protection, while also noting that the Ministry of Environment has established specific committees in some cases. He listed ongoing activities, including, conservation programs, climate change work, protected areas management, coastal zone management, and forestry and mangrove projects. He also noted that Cambodia's principal constraints to MEA implementation are lack of capacity in personnel and knowledge, insufficient financial resources and problematic coordination among ministries.

Siti Aini Hanum, Indonesia, noted that her country is party to the Vienna Convention, Montreal Protocol, UNFCCC, CBD and the Ramsar Convention. She noted difficulties in MEA implementation due to NFPs not being within national implementing agencies, while stating that Indonesia has done little work on promoting synergies. She highlighted the impact of the country's recent economic crisis, which threatens its ability to implement its international obligations. She also noted a lack of capacity to attend meetings and emphasized that discussions on synergies simplify efforts and do not create an additional layer of discussion. She further called for better donor coordination with regards to identifying and financing synergistic efforts.

Somsanouk Phommakhot, Lao Peoples' Democratic Republic, noted that the country is party to the Vienna Convention, Montreal Protocol, UNFCCC and CBD. He highlighted work on drafting guidelines for a national greenhouse gas policy under the UNFCCC, and on

developing a national biodiversity strategy and action plan for integrating the national environmental protection law with the CBD. He further highlighted a lack of capacity and human resources to implement MEA obligations, and emphasized the need to be able to communicate the implications and benefits of ratifying MEAs to higher levels of government.

Nadzri Yahaya, Malaysia, noted that his country is party to the Montreal Protocol, Vienna Convention, UNFCCC, the Basel Convention, CBD, CCD and the World Heritage Convention, while overall having signed at least 30 international or regional agreements incorporating environmental components. He noted that Malaysia has approximately 40 environment-related laws or regulations. He highlighted the difficulty of national coordination as the federal government has the mandate to negotiate and ratify treaties, while the States are responsible for on-the-ground environmental activities. Regarding such implementation, he described horizontal work within the Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment through inter-agency meetings, as well as a vertical approach within the Ministry providing directives for implementation to specialized departments and committees. He added that coordination activities are generally *ad hoc*, and suggested examining a more structured approach. He then highlighted a specific project example where a protected area was created as a Ramsar site.

Khin Than Than Aye, Myanmar, noted that the country is party to the Vienna Convention, Montreal Protocol, UNFCCC, CBD, CCD, CITES and the World Heritage Convention. She highlighted requests to the GEF for funding of climate change enabling activities and the preparation of a national report for the CCD.

Ben Malayang III, Philippines, noted that his country is party to, *inter alia*, the Montreal Protocol, UNFCCC, UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), CITES, CBD, Ramsar Convention, Basel Convention, the ITTO, Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution, and the ASEAN Haze Convention, as well as the WTO and its agreements. He stated that national implementation strategies have employed both thematic approaches using specific groups or agencies, as well as cross-policy engagement among different sectoral actors. He noted that responsibility for different MEAs is spread among ministries and agencies, addressing foreign affairs, environment, agriculture, trade and forests. He stated that levels of effort to comply with MEAs are generally high for those entailing sanctions (e.g. ITTO and WTO Agreements), high for those incorporating important political, social or economic priorities (e.g. CBD and UNCLOS), and low for those lacking sanctions or entailing only general commitments (e.g. Agenda 21). Malayang highlighted that governments generally have a high level of responsibility for environmental issues and a low commitment to action, whereas civil society has low levels of responsibility but high levels of commitment. He concluded by recommending improved articulation of regional principles for implementation, a global forum for addressing MEA implementation, and formal studies and research on the link between MEAs and other international agreements, such as the WTO.

Cheng Geok Ling, Singapore, noted that her country is party to the Vienna Convention, Montreal Protocol, the Basel Convention, CBD and CITES, and that the NFP for most MEAs is under the Ministry of Environment. She also highlighted cooperation with other agencies, such as customs. She noted a shortage of trained personnel and knowledge, and suggested that synergies could be used to channel resources to issue areas that promote implementation of multiple conventions. She highlighted work in Singapore to have inter-agency groups work on related agreements such as the POPs, PIC and Basel Conventions. She finally stressed the need for a framework or set of guiding principles regarding the creation of synergies within the implementation of MEAs.

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Srisuda Jayarabandh, Thailand, noted that the country is party to the Vienna Convention, Montreal Protocol, UNFCCC, the Basel Convention, CITES, the Ramsar Convention and the World Heritage Convention. She also highlighted work regarding ratification of the PIC Convention and the CBD. Institutionally, she stated that the Office of Environmental Policy and Planning is responsible for the UNFCCC, CBD, Ramsar and World Heritage Conventions; the Pollution Control Department for the Basel, Rotterdam and POPs Conventions; the Department of Industrial Works for the Vienna Convention; and the Forest Department for CITES. She explained that departmental committees address particular sectoral issues, such as forests, fisheries, agriculture and livestock, while noting a lack of communication among such committees. Under the UNFCCC, she highlighted a number of national activities, including its national communication to the UNFCCC and studies on Clean Development Mechanism strategies and the use of alternatives to CFCs. Regarding the CBD, she noted work on compiling biodiversity studies, formulation of national policies and plans for conservation and sustainable use, establishment of a rice seed storage facility and efforts on biodiversity data management.

Nguyen Thi Thanh Tram, Vietnam, noted that the country is party to the Vienna Convention, Montreal Protocol, UNFCCC, the Basel Convention, CBD and the Ramsar Convention, and is examining the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the PIC and POPs Conventions. She stated that institutional authority for MEAs is distributed among the National Environment Agency, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, and the Ministry of Planning and Investment. She further highlighted a national law on environmental protection, national strategies for environmental protection and sustainable development, a national action plan for protecting biodiversity, and work on wetlands conservation and implementation of UNFCCC obligations. She noted poor coordination and information-sharing among relevant agencies, as well as a problem of awareness within the government, especially at the local level. She then highlighted a number of priorities, including, *inter alia*: national strategies for negotiating and implementing MEAs; closer coordination between central and local authorities; more expertise on administrative, technical, economic and scientific issues related to national implementation; training activities; improved public awareness and education; and additional financing of implementation activities.

Tim Clairs, UNDP-GEF, highlighted the GEF's formal linkages to the CBD, Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, UNFCCC and POPs Convention, as well as its more indirect linkages to the Ramsar Convention, CITES, CMS and the CCD. He described the GEF Council as an institution to promote synergies and recommended further work using its representational structure of country constituencies. He highlighted the recently approved GEF Operational Program 12 – the Integrated Ecosystem Management Approach, which seeks to develop synergies among biodiversity, climate change, international waters and land degradation. He noted existing proposals for projects in Tam Dao, Vietnam, and the Pulangi Watershed, Philippines. He also suggested the use of GEF grants for targeted research in the area of synergies.

U Wai Lin, CCD Secretariat, noted that out of the ASEAN countries, only Thailand and Brunei have yet to complete the ratification process. He stated that the CCD Secretariat has established, or is in the process of establishing, relations with the CBD, the Ramsar Convention and the UNFCCC, as well as the FAO, UNDP, World Meteorological Organization, UNESCO and the International Fund for Agriculture and Development. He also noted that CCD activities in Asia have involved the development of thematic programme networks on assessment and monitoring, agro-forestry and range management, and also reviewed ESCAP's role as the CCD's regional coordinating unit for Asia.

Co-chair Ibarahim then highlighted the common difficulty for many countries to understand all of the obligations entailed within conventions that they have ratified. She noted work within ASEAN, particularly Working Groups on MEAs and Biodiversity. Discussion in the group then focused on, *inter alia*: the role of the GEF and the ASEAN Secretariat; how to manage competition for limited financial resources; concern over making regional cooperation a conditionality for funding; the need for a country-driven approach; elements lending themselves to regional cooperation, such as training and bio-regional approaches; further assistance by MEA secretariats in identifying synergies for implementation and education; capacity constraints; and the role of civil society.

**Recommendations:** The working group ultimately reached agreement regarding the ASEAN region on a number of areas, including: the importance of promoting synergies between and coordination of MEAs for optimizing resource use, while noting the need to specifically define how and when such work is to be done; recognition that many ASEAN countries are currently at the stage of implementing MEAs individually, and thus have not yet moved to developing synergies; recognition of constraints to implementation regarding capacity, institutional and financial issues, as well as linkages with the local level; general prioritization of issues under the Montreal Protocol, CBD, UNFCCC, the Basel Convention and the POPs Convention; the need to raise awareness; improved understanding of issues at both the negotiation and implementation stages; the importance of not assuming commitments in implementation efforts beyond those included in particular MEAs; and the need for additional capacity building efforts. The group also recommended three potential case studies:

- a review of Malaysia's experience in implementing commitments under the CBD and Ramsar Convention within a particular protected area or Ramsar site;
- an analysis of potential areas for synergy within Thailand regarding co-implementation of its UNFCCC and Montreal Protocol obligations; and
- a general assessment of the needs of ASEAN countries for implementing MEAs, most specifically the Montreal Protocol, CBD, UNFCCC, the Basel Convention and the POPs convention.

### CLOSING PLENARY

On Tuesday, 27 February, following the presentation of the four working group reports (summarized previously under each working group), a panel comprised of the working group chairs and other experts discussed challenges faced and lessons learned in the working group deliberations and then responded to questions from the floor.

Chair Zakri Hamid, UNU/IAS, noted the need to highlight the examples and best practices raised within the working groups' discussions, and specifically emphasized the themes of communication, outreach and awareness. He also highlighted the need for case studies to further explore tangible inter-linkages. Raman Letchumanan, ASEAN Secretariat, highlighted the institutional framework of the ASEAN Secretariat, including annual meetings of environment ministers and officials. He also listed internal working groups addressing MEAs and coastal management issues, while noting a lack of project activities within such groups. Letchumanan emphasized the potential role of the ASEAN Secretariat in providing input to and coordinating country-driven regional projects.

Jacques Mougeot, SPREP, highlighted SPREP's strong regional framework and its action plan to implement regional conventions. He noted difficulties with synergies and expressed satisfaction that the inter-linkages initiative was moving toward concrete solutions. Mougeot noted the difficulties in projecting the Pacific's voice into the global scene and in this regard expressed satisfaction with the outcomes

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of discussions on a Pacific Islands case study. Willem Wijnstekers, CITES Secretariat, noted that MEAs not only deal with the same issues but also use the same tools, and emphasized linking issue clusters and tools to avoid unnecessary costs. He advocated use of the Internet to coordinate and economize training activities. He stressed coordinating activities, increasing awareness of the need for consistent input into conventions, and promoting regional coordination and positions to achieve greater balance. Wijnstekers also called for greater political commitment to address the problem of implementation and enforcement, and stressed the importance of synergies at the national level.

During the ensuing discussion, two participants emphasized the need to develop methodologies for MEA planning, implementation and reporting. Participants stressed capacity needs, particularly with regard to research, monitoring and basic infrastructure to enable Internet and other communication. One panelist highlighted the potential for regional level work, such as regional institutions for research and monitoring. Another panelist noted a recommendation that MEA secretariats work together to identify needs of developing countries, especially within clusters of agreements relating to biodiversity, chemicals and ozone/climate change. Several participants and panelists highlighted the need to develop synergies with poverty alleviation, health and other development needs. One participant noted that donors often take thematic over synergistic approaches. Another highlighted the need to integrate MEA commitments within national policy frameworks, identify funding synergies in development assistance frameworks, and develop demonstration projects. He provided the example of forest fire prevention in Southeast Asia to address climate, biodiversity, trans-boundary pollution and health issues.

During the closing remarks, Bradnee Chambers, UNU/IAS, highlighted lessons learned from the meeting. He noted that discussions addressed the different dimensions of synergies and inter-linkages and that, while these were found to be complex, it is evident that there are entry points at different levels. He noted an increased understanding of such entry points at the regional and national level. Chambers said there is a clear need for an assessment of how MEAs are integrated and implemented, as well as for specific case studies. The meeting also showed that synergies can be approached on the basis of issue clusters, tools, human health, an ecosystem approach and a bio-regional perspective. He particularly stressed the value to UNU's work of the outputs from the working group on multi-stakeholder partnership and participation.

Jerry Velasquez, UNU/GEIC, highlighted UNU's strategy, action plan and mandate. He underscored UNU's role in developing and understanding inter-linkages, promoting an understanding among stakeholders of the inter-linkages initiative, and promoting implementation at the international, national and regional level. He identified follow-up activities including the launching of case studies, a conference report, a mailing list to provide information on upcoming activities, and three follow-up meetings: the global thematic round-table in Tokyo in July 2001, the 2nd International Conference in July 2002, and Rio+10. Zakri Hamid then thanked panel members, speakers and participants, and formally closed the meeting.

### THINGS TO LOOK FOR

**CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND ENVIRONMENT – BRIDGING GAPS AND MOVING FORWARD:** This conference will take place from 8-9 March 2001, in Geneva. It is being organized

by the Global Environment and Trade Study (GETS) and the World Trade Institute (WTI). For more information, contact: Monica Araya, GETS; tel: +1-203-432-5216; fax: +1-203-432-3817; e-mail: monica.araya@yale.edu; Internet: <http://www.gets.org/Geneva2001.htm>

**SBSTTA-6:** The Sixth Meeting of the CBD's Subsidiary Body for Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice will meet from 12-16 March 2001, in Montreal. For more information, contact: the CBD Secretariat; tel: +1-514-288-2220; fax: +1-514-288-6588; e-mail: [secretariat@biodiv.org](mailto:secretariat@biodiv.org); Internet: <http://www.biodiv.org>

#### PANEL OF EXPERTS ON ACCESS AND BENEFIT

**SHARING:** This panel will meet from 19-22 March 2001, in Montreal. For more information, contact: the CBD Secretariat; tel: +1-514-288-2220; fax: +1-514-288-6588; e-mail: [secretariat@biodiv.org](mailto:secretariat@biodiv.org); Internet: <http://www.biodiv.org>

**CSD-9:** The Ninth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development will be held in New York from 16-27 April 2001. This session will focus on: atmosphere; energy/transport; information for decision making and participation; and international cooperation for an enabling environment. The topic of the multi-stakeholder dialogue segment will be energy and transport. For more information contact: Andrey Vasilyev, Division for Sustainable Development; tel: +1-212-963-5949; fax: +1-212-963-4260; e-mail: [vasilyev@un.org](mailto:vasilyev@un.org); Internet: [http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd9/csd9\\_2001.htm#](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd9/csd9_2001.htm#)

**CSD-10 (PREPCOM):** The Tenth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development will convene for a meeting in New York from 30 April - 2 May 2001 to serve as the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Rio+10). For more information contact: Andrey Vasilyev, Division for Sustainable Development; tel: +1-212-963-5949; fax: +1-212-963-4260; e-mail: [vasilyev@un.org](mailto:vasilyev@un.org); Internet: [http://www.un.org/rio+10/web\\_pages/first\\_prepcom.htm](http://www.un.org/rio+10/web_pages/first_prepcom.htm)

#### FIRST SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF THE UN FORUM ON

**FORESTS:** This meeting is scheduled for 11-22 June 2001, in New York. For more information, contact: Secretariat, Intergovernmental Forum on Forests; tel: +1-212-963-6208; fax: +1-212-963-3463; e-mail: [vahanen@un.org](mailto:vahanen@un.org); Internet: [http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/unff\\_2001\\_fsm.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/unff_2001_fsm.htm)

#### RIO+10 GLOBAL ROUND-TABLE ON INTER-LINKAGES:

This Round-table will take place from 5-6 July 2001, in Tokyo. For more information contact: Jerry Velasquez, United Nations University; tel: +81-3-5467-1301; fax: +81-3-3407-8164; e-mail: [jerry@geic.or.jp](mailto:jerry@geic.or.jp); Internet: <http://www.unu.edu>

#### RESUMED COP-6/14TH SESSIONS OF THE UNFCCC

**SUBSIDIARY BODIES:** The resumed COP-6 (as outlined under COP-6 decision FCCC/CP/2000/L.3) and the 14th sessions of the Subsidiary Bodies of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change will be held from 16-27 July 2001 in Bonn. For more information contact: the UNFCCC Secretariat; tel: +49-228-815-1000; fax: +49-228-815-1999; e-mail: [secretariat@unfccc.int](mailto:secretariat@unfccc.int); Internet: <http://www.unfccc.int>