



UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

Programme des Nations Unies pour l'environnement

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Программа Организации Объединенных Наций по окружающей среде

برنامج الأمم المتحدة للبيئة

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1st meeting of the EMG Task Team for on maximizing the effectiveness of the EMG in the context of the post 2015 development agenda
21 January 2015

Teleconference, 15:00-17:00 hrs, Geneva time

Distribution: EMG Task Team members

Date: 17 February 2015

Minutes of the 1st meeting of the EMG Task Team for on maximizing the effectiveness of the EMG in the context of the post 2015 development agenda

Introduction

The first meeting of the Task Team took place by teleconference from 15.00 to 17.00 (CET) on 21 January 2015, and was chaired by the Director of the EMG Secretariat, Elliott Harris. The list of participants is provided in Annex I. Following the Chair's opening remarks, the meeting adopted its agenda (Annex II) which was composed of two interlinked issues of 1) Maximizing the effectiveness of the EMG and 2) Assessing the environmental dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The meeting discussed and provided comments to the Terms of Reference of the Task Team as follows:

Part I - Maximizing the effectiveness of the EMG

The chair provided a background referring to decision 11 of the first UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) as well as the decision 8 of the 20th meeting of the EMG senior officials on maximizing the effectiveness of the EMG in the context of the post-2015 development agenda. He drew the attention of the meeting to the Discussion Note including the ToR for the Task Team, the envisaged process, work plan and modalities of its work and invited the meeting's consideration and comments. He opened the discussion by highlighting key issues such as working modalities of the EMG, EMG's fitness of purpose, the products developed to date by the Group and the role of the Secretariat in managing resources and its effectiveness.

Key Considerations

The following views and comments were expressed by the Task Team:

1) Approach for identification of topics/issues for EMG consideration (Internal UN issues as well as global issues)

- In addressing the effectiveness, it should be considered if the issues covered by the EMG to date have been addressed in a reactive or pro-active manner and if either of the two approaches has been effective.

- While EMG has been addressing new and evolving topics in an ad-hoc manner, it is useful to identify how it can be better coordinated to identify the most relevant potential areas for its contributions. Furthermore, consideration should be given to how links with other interagency processes and bodies, such as the UNDG, can be strengthened to increase the effectiveness of the EMG and to avoid duplication.
- A more systematic approach can be considered for consideration of the emerging and strategic and operational issues. A call for proposals, for example, could achieve this end.
- Coordination with other coordination bodies such as the UN Oceans, UN Energy etc. would be needed to avoid duplication of work.

2) *EMG working modalities, their effectiveness and work load (consultative processes, IMGs, Task teams, reports etc.)*

- Possibility to use the time-bound IMGs, Consultative Processes and Task Teams for the purpose of monitoring progress and complete deliverables; while these can still render the work ad-hoc.
- One of the highlights of the EMG is its time-bound work modalities; however, the voluntary involvement of organisations in such time-bound work renders any long-term work challenging. Alternatives to time-bound nature of the EMG need to be discussed in greater detail considering any and all advantage and disadvantages.
- To assess whether the EMG is “fit for purpose”, it would be useful to consider a number of Task Teams, Consultative Processes and IMGs that have been initiated and concluded since the EMG’s inception . As such, the assessment of the effectiveness of the EMG can first begin by outlining the contributions of 5 or 6 of these modalities, ranging from issues of prominent-nature, such as Green Economy, to others where the EMG contributions were less significant.
- It is important to identify the measures by which the Task Team can gauge the success and challenges of the EMG contributions.
- EMG should assesses which working mechanism would be most fit for purpose each time it decides to engage in a particular issue as well as assess the efforts required, encouraging the agency that puts forward the proposal to commit resources (time and/or financial).

3) *Dissemination of EMG products within the UN system – how does this happen, what is the take up of our products and conclusions; what have been the most effective methods?*

- It should be considered whether the products developed to date by the EMG have been useful in their scope and how widely they were distributed and used across the UN System.
- The EMG Senior Officials Meetings (SOMs) often fail to attract a full range of executive heads representing the member organisations. What steps could be taken to enhance the institutional ownership and accountability among EMG members? Also, the EMG could benefit from being aware of relevant interagency discussions that take place, for example in the HLCP group on climate change that is working on a system-wide climate change strategy.
- The chair highlighted that the EMG’s current communication with the CEB is adequate in ensuring organisations are engaged in the EMG proceedings but welcomed the suggestion to ensure that the representatives of agencies in the Senior Official Meetings have adequate decision making capacity to commit their agencies to agreed tasks.

4) *Role of the Secretariat in guiding and promoting the work streams – resource implications, timeliness, other issues*

- The Secretariat was thanked for its important coordinating role to date while it should continue to ensure relevant synergies across the work of the EMG. Further discussions should be entertained to evaluate how synergies between ongoing works can be increased.

5) *How successful has the EMG been in projecting the image of a coordinated UN approach in its work?*

The chair highlighted the work on the Green Economy as a successful example of showcasing the system-wide efforts on the topic. He also questioned whether the EMG was successful in highlighting the distinction between global and internal management issues, and if the issues were married adequately.

6) *Is the EMG fit for purpose and institutionally-well equipped to guide and support the UN system on environmental dimensions of SDGs?*

- Task Team participants questioned what was meant by “support” of the post-2015 agenda, and what “areas” of the EMG platform these contributions would fit. In response, the chair suggested the EMG “support” could constitute e.g. (1) identifying environmental policies that Member States should put in place within the environmental dimension and (2) providing structure for agencies to individually and collectively develop and support Member States when they implement these policies. Synergies with UNDG need to be strengthened to achieve this.
- Further discussions need to be entertained to outline how the EMG can best provide support to member states to ensure long-term coordinated action on these (e.g. through think pieces and written briefs to Member States on possible multifaceted approaches across sectors and topics). The chair highlighted the challenges associated with corresponding directly to member states; however, this could be interesting to consider when discussing the working modalities of the EMG.

Agreed Action I :

The Task Team agreed to include the above comments in the ToR which will be circulated to Task Team members for final comments and approval. Task Team members were invited to indicate their interest if they wish to support the work of the secretariat throughout this process.

Part II - The environment in the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets

Discussion on the relevance and utility of the EMG input to the SDGs process. Possible approach and envisaged procedure

The chair provided a picture of the current preparations for negotiation of the SDGs, the work of the UN Technical Support Team (TST) on the SDGs and the relevance and additionality of the EMG’s input on the environmental dimension (including opportunities for collaboration with the TST on the indicators work). The chair reminded the Task Team of the EMG’s input on sound management of chemicals to the Open Ended Working Group for the SDGs and highlighted that

Member States are not in a position to re-open the goals at the stage. He suggested that the Task Team can focus on the environmental areas which may still need further strengthening through, for example, an analysis and suggestions of appropriate and adequate indicators, an analysis of previously agreed global environmental goals and targets and their consistency with the proposed SDGs, and through highlighting the interlinkages between the proposed goals and targets.

Key considerations:

The following views and comments were expressed by the Task Team:

- It could be useful to start with a desk study aiming to develop a matrix and analysis of draft SDGs from an environmental perspective, taking into account comments and analysis of the SDGs and related documents prepared by UN agencies, based on which a further analysis of the environmental dimension would be carried out.
- The analysis should be conducted in a timely manner and examine potential linkages between SDGs and existing global environmental goals, programs and partnerships in key environmental areas (e.g. chemicals, air pollution, health etc.), countries and sectors, as well as the environment-related contributions already proposed by UN organisations. This study could inform the types of partnerships that are needed to develop further coherence in environmental domains relating to SDGs; and could then be complemented by a detailed analysis of the findings by the Secretariat of the EMG.
- Any input to the SDGs need to be framed in a way that it supports reflection of interested parties and support Member States. It should not seek to influence political negotiations.
- The Secretariat of the EMG could increase connection to TST to avoid duplication of work and ensure it is ready for the next set of requests that may arise e.g. by the Statistical Commission, which could also constitute contributions by the EMG to the process. The Secretariat would further benefit from being aware of work going on within the frames of other coordination mechanisms such as UN Water and UN Energy.
- Further discussion should be entertained on potential EMG contributions to country-level work by the UN. The UNDG Working Groups on SD and on UN Programming have an existing mandate regarding guidance to UN Country Teams and UNDAFs, (see previous detailed written comments from UNDP also on the work around SWS). Any potential EMG contributions relevant to such country level guidance needs to take into consideration, support and avoid duplication of this UNDG mandate.
- It is critical that all targets and goals are at least at the same ambition level with what states have already agreed in other for a (such as the MEAs).

Agreed action II :

The Task Team agreed that a desk study should be conducted to assess the existing contributions by UN agencies to the SDG process and to screen the environmental dimensions of the SDGs, looking at their implications for implementation from an environmental perspective including in mainstreaming of the environmental dimension in the UN system and the role of the EMG. This could then be supported by further analysis. It is understood by the Task Team that this desk study will be conducted in a timely manner and take into account the ongoing SDG process and deadlines.

To ensure all relevant partnerships are identified, the Task Team will involve interested UN entities and other relevant stakeholders as appropriate, namely non-UN organisations, to feed into process; however, this will be discussed in the next 1-2 months, following the completion of the technical work.

It was highlighted that any message should be formulated as an informal position of the EMG, in order to avoid that it is interpreted as a formal UN position for which the process does not have a mandate. The TST should be the main interface between the EMG and the intergovernmental process. Once initial technical analysis is completed, the Task Team will consider which components of its work could be made publicly available.

The level of detail for EMG's input on indicators will be further discussed. However, it is understood by the Task Team that EMG's contributions on indicators will 1) reflect interlinkages between goals and targets 2) promote coherence and integration of the environmental dimension with the social and economic dimensions and 3) be of universal-nature and support further analysis at national level with support of UNCTs; and create value added for member states.

Annex 1 : List of Participants

	Name	Organization
1	Marylene Beau	BRS
2	Daniele Violetti	UNFCCC
3	Ryo Nakamura	UN-DESA/UNFF
4	Corli Pretorius	UNEP
5	Maike Jensen	UNEP
6	Xenia von Lilien	CEB Secretariat
8	Federica Pietracci	UNDESA/DSD
9	Frederik Haag	IMO
10	Timothy Scott	UNDP
11	Elizabeth Mrema	UNEP
12	Masa Nagai	UNEP
13	Dionyssia Geka	OFO
14	Isabella Marras	UNEP/SUN
15	Michele Candotti	UNEP
16	Achim Halpaap	UNITAR
17	Cecilia Lopez y Royo	UNOPS
18	Paul Egerton	WMO
19	Alex Heikens	UNICEF
20	Karsten Steinfatt	WTO
21	Sara Thompson	World Bank
22	Richard Choularton	WFP
23	Moez David	UN WOMEN

24	Marianna Belsky	UN WOMEN
25	Elliott Harris Hossein Fadaei Jannica Pitkanen-Brunnsberg Dominique Souris	EMG Secretariat

Annex II

Provisional agenda

1st meeting of the EMG Task Team for on maximizing the effectiveness of the EMG in the context of the post 2015 development agenda 21 January 2015 Teleconference, 15:00-17:00 hrs, Geneva time Chaired by Elliott Harris, Head of the EMG Secretariat	Distribution: EMG Task Team members
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Documents:

- A) Provisional agenda
- B) Discussion Note including a draft Terms of Reference for the process of maximizing the effectiveness of the EMG*
- C) Discussion Note on the utility and process of the of the EMG input on the environmental aspects of the proposed SDGs (TBC) *
- D) Briefing note on the current considerations of the SDGs indicators in the UN system including the one of UNEP (TBC) *

*Documents will be provided separately

Provisional Agenda

Part I - Maximizing the effectiveness of the EMG

1. Introductory remarks on the background and elements of the EMG SOM20 Decision VIII

The envisaged process and consideration of the TOR, work plan and modalities of work of the Task Team for preparation of a Report for the 21st meeting of the EMG Senior Officials

2. Next steps of the process and the next meeting of the Task Team

Mapping/stocktaking , gap analysis and options report for SOM21

Part II - The environment in the preliminary Sustainable Development Goals and Targets

3. Discussion on the relevance and utility of the EMG input to the SDGs process

The current preparations for negotiation of the SDGs, the work of the UN Task Team on the SDGs and the relevance and additionally of the EMG's input on the environmental dimension

4. Approach of the EMG in providing its input and the envisaged process

5. Update and information sharing on ongoing work on SDG indicators in the system

Discussion on the work that the UN system is doing on indicators in order to identify ways in which this work can lead to integrated or composite indicators that preserve the interlinkages among, and integration of the various goals and targets. EMG members can consider opportunities for cooperation and a possible UN-wide input on the indicators.

Part III

6. Any other matters

7. Closure of the teleconference

