



21st Senior Officials' Meeting of the Environment Management Group Technical Segment	MG/SOM.21/04/Rev.2
Senior Segment, 24 September 2015, (8.30 a.m-11 a.m.) at the UN HQ, Secretariat Building Conference Room A (CR-A) 1st Basement	21 September 2015
	Distribution: EMG members

Strategic Directions for the EMG and its future work

Note by the Chair

Introduction

The Senior Officials, under agenda item 3, are invited to engage in a strategic and forward looking discussion to provide their perspectives on enhancing the coordination, coherence and overall effectiveness of UN system-wide work on the environment. This discussion will take place in the context of the historic launch of the 2030 sustainable development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the increased expectations of the UN system, as expressed in the outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference, the first meeting of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA), and the outcome document of the September 2015 Sustainable Development Summit.

The increased focus on environmental issues in the UN system has been significant, reflecting both the rising importance assigned to these issues by Member States and the public at large, as well as the growing competence and capacity of the system in environmental matters. Many agencies now have strategic approaches on the environment as part of their overall strategic and programmatic frameworks. However, ensuring the fully effective implementation of these strategies in a collaborative manner and their alignment with the SDGs requires greater coherence and better coordination among the various UN entities involved.

The meeting of the Senior Officials marks as well the 15th anniversary of the EMG, which was established by the UN General Assembly with the stated purpose of enhancing United Nations system-wide interagency coordination related to specific issues in the field of environment and human settlements. This year's deliberations of the Senior Officials will therefore be a timely opportunity to consider the adequacy of the EMG's Terms of Reference and its place within the overall post 2015 governance structure and its future focus and

modalities of work, so as to ensure it fits the purpose of contributing effectively to the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda and the achievement of the SDGs.

In their deliberations, the Senior Officials may consider the progress reports by the EMG's Issue Management Groups and Consultative Processes, most notably, the progress of the Consultative Process on the System Wide Framework of Strategies on the Environment, and the report of the EMG Task Team on "Maximizing the Effectiveness of the EMG in the Context of the Post-2015 Development Agenda".

Thematic panel discussions

In light of the above, it is proposed that the Senior Officials organize their discussion and provide their strategic vision in an open and interactive manner on the following two interlinked themes through two panel discussions. A set of strategic questions are proposed to frame the discussions of the panels as follows:

Panel I Challenges and opportunities of the UN system in responding to the SDGs and supporting their effective implementation in particular the environmental sustainability dimension

Moderator

Christian Friis Bach, Executive Secretary of the UNECE

Discussants:

Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP

Gina Casar, Associate Administrator of UNDP

Joan Clos, Executive Director of the UN-Habitat

Sally Fegan-Wyles, Acting Head of UNITAR

Shamshad Akhtar, Executive Secretary of UN-ESCAP

Suggested questions for discussion:

- 1) What are the main challenges for the UN system as a whole in integrating and implementing the SDGs, in particular the environmental dimension?
- 2) How do UN agencies, each operating within their respective mandates, best support integrated policy formulation and implementation of the "nexus" issues such as Environment and Health, Environment and Energy and Environment and Land Management, etc.?
- 3) Would the response of the UN system to the environmental dimension of the sustainable development agenda benefit from enhanced coordination among the agencies active in these areas, and if so, what form should such enhanced coordination take?
- 4) How can the UN system support the integration and implementation of environmental goals under the MEAs in an effective manner, linking them to the 2030 sustainable development agenda?

Panel II Contribution of a System Wide Framework of Strategies on the Environment and ways of maximizing the EMG effectiveness in supporting the 2030 development agenda

Moderator

Elliott Harris, Director of the EMG

Discussants

Flavia Schlegel, Assistant Director General of UNESCO

Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary of UNFCCC

Rolph Payet, Executive Secretary of the BRS

Christian Blondin, Chief of Cabinet of WMO

Fang Liu, Secretary General of ICAO

Mr. Gary Fowle, Head, Liaison Office to the United Nations, ITU

Suggested questions for discussion:

- 1) What has been done or needs to be done in each agency to align their existing environment-related work programs or strategies with the SDGs?
- 2) What can be the value and function of a System Wide Framework of Strategies on the Environment in supporting the alignment of agencies' strategies and work programs with the SDGs?
- 3) What are the challenges and implications of committing to such a Framework from the perspective of an institution and its governing body?
- 4) In what areas should the EMG have an institutional role in the collective efforts to support implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, and how can that role best be defined and realized?
- 5) Do the current governance structure and operating modalities of the EMG suffice as it commits to support the 2030 sustainable development agenda?