

Terms of Reference of the Consultative Process on [UN System Wide Framework Strategy(ies)] on the Environment

Background

As an integral dimension of sustainable development, the environment is inseparable from economic and social development. Environmental sustainability is locked together with economic and social development as the foundation underpinning those processes. Furthermore, environmental issues, in particular those of global concern to the international community, are inherently multidimensional and the various subsets of environmental, economic and social issues and interests are interconnected.

At the same time, however, individual institutions, including most of the bodies, funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, are each established with specific mandates and limited jurisdiction. Because of the autonomy exercised by their governing structures in their decision-making processes, the policies and actions on environmental and environment-related matters falling within their respective mandates have often been handled in a manner independent from the decision-making processes and activities of other organizations dealing with the same or similar matters.

Against this background, there have been repeated calls to organizations to strengthen coordination of their environmental and environment-related policies and activities. While considerable progress has been achieved in this endeavour, further efforts are needed for more effective coordination in the handling of environmental and environment-related matters, including in the context of the environmental programmes of bodies, funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system.

Member States in the outcome document of the Rio+20, Paragraph 88, reaffirmed the need to strengthen international environmental governance within the context of the institutional framework for sustainable development and called for empowering UNEP's coordination role in the UN system to lead efforts to formulate UN system-wide strategies on the environment.

Consistent with this call, the First Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP (UNEA) in June 2014 requested the Executive Director of UNEP to “develop system-wide strategies on the environment mainly through the EMG and to invite the engagement of the Secretary-General and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination to facilitate broad ownership in the United Nations at all levels”¹.

In response, UNEP circulated to the EMG members for consideration and comments at the 20th meeting of the EMG Senior Officials in September 2014 a Provisional Note outlining the possible objectives and scope of a UN system-wide strategy(ies) (SWS), as well as a process for its preparation and a Strategic Directions note (Working document: EMG/SOM.20/04). These documents were followed by a background document prepared by UNEP at the end of October 2014.

¹ UNEA Resolution 1/11

The EMG senior officials “agreed to provide feedback through the EMG Secretariat on the draft outline for the SWS and in response to the questions posed in the Strategic Directions note, and on any other relevant issues as set out in the background document.” Based on the feedback and views of EMG members, UNEP agreed to “provide a proposal on the further development of the [SWFS] on the Environment for consideration by the EMG at their next meeting”.

These Terms of Reference are proposed for a Consultative Process in the EMG to support the development of proposals for preparation of a [SWFS] including a work plan and modality of work.

Rationale and Focus of the [SWFS]

The [SWFS], on the environment is intended to ensure the coherence of relevant policies and the effective coordination of the diverse services, activities and programmes provided by the UN system in the field of the environment. It is thus intended to strengthen the coordination and collaborative partnerships among UN system organizations in the field of the environment taking into account inter alia the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the objectives and legislative frameworks of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements

The [SWFS] will:

- (a) Set out a UN system-wide medium- and long-term vision in the field of the environment which should be derived from, be in line with and contribute to the implementation of the SDGs;
- (b) Take into consideration common and/or complementary policies and approaches concerning emerging and important environmental issues of global concern;
- (c) Propose means of strengthening existing processes to facilitate better coordination for the planning and execution of UN system activities that support the implementation of internationally agreed environmental objectives and goals; and
- (d) Suggest a mechanism for assessing the effectiveness of the UN system-wide activities undertaken in the context of the [Framework Strategy(ies)] and propose new processes if appropriate.

The [(SWFS)] will encompass, draw on and serve as a framework for a number of sub-strategies pertaining to specific thematic issues, some of which may already exist under the leadership of a specific UN body or specialized agency.

The [SWFS] will serve as a tool for UNEA to carry out its function of providing general policy guidance for the direction and coordination of environmental programmes within the UN system, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII) taking into account the respective mandates and the legislative and autonomous governing bodies of the other UN entities.

The [SWFS] will be non-prescriptive and respond to national priorities and development processes and the multilateral environmental agreements to which member states are party. It will be developed and implemented in a manner fully respecting the mandate and autonomy of the respective organizations of the UN system (including for normative and operational

work). Furthermore, it will take into account the ongoing work of the other UN agencies processes and coordination mechanisms, including the UNDG at all levels, with the aim to avoid duplication and ensure synergies and advance non-siloed environmental policies.

It is hoped that through the approval of [SWFS] by the UNEA and the endorsement of the UN General Assembly, the governing bodies of the respective organizations, will refer to such a framework when developing policies and programmes in the field of the environment. Each organization, based on its mandate, would continue to determine its policies and decide on its activities in the area of the environment; however, in so doing, it would be expected to draw upon the [SWFS]. To remain relevant and provide useful guidance for the UN system organization, the UN SWFS will need to set out assessment and evaluation procedures and processes for the regular updating of its priorities and approaches. In this context, this [system-wide framework strategy(ies)] will need to be operationalized through a dynamic process of continued consultations and interactions among the UN system organizations.

Responsibilities, functions and modalities of the Consultative Process

The process for the preparation of the [SWFS] will be led by UNEP in collaboration and consultation with the participating UN organizations and the MEAs.

Based on the above-mentioned background papers prepared by UNEP, comments received from the 20th meeting of the EMG senior officials and additional comments by the UN agencies in follow up of that meeting; the process will embark on a set of activities outlined in the undermentioned workplan to support the preparation of the [Framework Strategy(ies)] for consideration of the 21st meeting of the EMG SOM in September 2015. The [Framework Strategy(ies)], once approved by the senior officials, will be considered by the second meeting of UNEA, and subsequently endorsed by the 71st meeting of the UN General Assembly in 2016. Throughout the process, the Executive Director of UNEP, in his capacity as Chair of the Environment Management Group (EMG), will provide regular briefs to the UNEP CPR and the EMG members on the progress of the Process.

The EMG will provide a platform to facilitate the consultations of the process in accordance with its mandate and through its time-bound and issues-based approach. The EMG Secretariat will prepare the meetings and discussions of the process, which will involve sharing the drafts of the [SWFS] to the members of the EMG, receiving the inputs and comments of the UN agencies, and facilitating the discussions of the broad parameters of the [SWFS] within the EMG.

The Consultative Process will consider and provide comments on the draft papers prepared by UNEP on the overview of the environmental mandates, and on the contributions and potential of the UN agencies and MEAs. This overview will be used as a basis for the preparation of a gap analysis by UNEP, which will define the outline, scope and the structure of the [Framework Strategy(ies)]. Subsequently, the Consultative process will be invited to provide comments on the gap analysis and the outline of the proposed [Framework Strategy(ies)] and will be engaged in the following discussions for elaboration of the [Framework Strategy(ies)]. The Consultative Process will provide its contributions and meet mostly through electronic means. It is, however, possible that the Consultative Process meets in person two times to agree on the outline and the final outcome of the Process for consideration of the EMG Senior Officials respectively.

Work Plan

Time	Actions	Expected outcome	Responsibilities
Dec 14 – March 15	Nomination by EMG members of focal points to the [SWFS] Consultative Process	Agencies have nominated their focal points	EMG Sec
	Communication of TOR to EMG focal points informing them about the process and seeking comments on the TOR.	Agencies have commented and agreed on the TOR	EMG Sec
	First meeting of the Consultative Process to provide final comments and agree on its TOR	Agreed TOR	Consultative Process
	Preparing an overview report of legislative background on the environment in the UN system, including comments and inputs of the UN agencies on their respective mandates, possible overlaps and opportunities for synergies, as well as the added value of the [SWFS]. Such report will also take into account: information/entries on each of the MEAs that provide much of the legislative background, including any relevant mandated activities of their secretariats, audits and other evaluations of the environmental activities and reporting modalities of UN agencies; and past system wide strategies on the environment and analysis of their effectiveness.	A compiled/mapping report on the environment in the UN system is prepared	UNEP Team
	Liaison with other relevant UN interagency mechanisms, such as UNDG, UN-Water, UN-Energy and UN-Oceans, to identify UN-wide action plans and possibilities for their engagement.	Agencies have commented and or provided input on their work, strategies etc. on the environment	UNEP Team with support of the EMG Sec and inputs of the Consultative Process

	<p><i>Preparation of a gap analysis and identification of the added value of the</i> [SWFS]</p>	<p>A synthesis gap analysis and the added value of the [SWFS]</p>	<p>UNEP Team Comments by the Consultative Process</p>
<p>March-April 2015</p>	<p><i>Second meeting of the Consultative Process</i> to discuss the synthesis report and agree on the outline of the [Framework Strategy(ies)] (Possible two days in-person meeting).</p> <p>The discussion could focus on the purpose of the [Framework Strategy(ies)] and its scope, definitions (strategy/strategies, framework strategy), added value of the [Framework Strategy(ies)] in view of the existing strategies , methodology or approach of the [Framework Strategy(ies)] (thematic vs matrix approach), areas of enhanced collaborative partnerships for coordination, roles and contribution of the EMG members to the elaboration of the [Framework Strategy(ies)].</p> <p><i>Progress report to mid-term meeting of the EMG Senior Officials</i></p> <p>(EMG members including MEAs can also inform their respective parties on the progress of the process as they wish so and appropriate)</p> <p><i>Progress report to the UNEP Senior Management Team</i></p>	<p>Agreed outline of the [SWFS]</p> <p>A written progress report to the mid-term meeting of the EMG senior officials</p> <p>A written progress report to the UNEP SMT and CPR</p>	<p>UNEP supported by the Consultative Process and the EMG Sec</p>

<p>May-June 2015</p>	<p><i>Preparation of the chapters of the draft [Framework Strategy(ies)] and division of labour</i></p> <p><i>Third meeting of the Consultative Process</i> to review the progress of the work by teleconference</p> <p>Progress report to the UNEP CPR</p>	<p>Draft proposal for the [Framework Strategy(ies)]</p> <p>Progress reports to Mid-Term EMG technical segment meeting</p> <p>Progress Report to CPR</p>	<p>UNEP Team</p> <p>EMG Sec</p> <p>UNEP and the EMG Sec</p>
<p>July-August 2015</p>	<p><i>Exchange of views and incorporation of comments by the EMG members</i> to the Draft [Framework Strategy(ies)] by electronic means</p> <p><i>Fourth meeting of the Process to finalize the draft [Framework Strategy(ies)]</i> and modalities for its submission to 21st meeting of the EMG SOM (In person meeting).</p>	<p>Comments of the EMG members incorporated</p> <p>Draft [SWFS] agreed by EMG members</p>	<p>UNEP Team</p> <p>EMG Sec and the UNEP team</p>
<p>September 2015</p>	<p><i>Progress report and the draft [Framework Strategy(ies)] for consideration of the EMG SOM21</i></p> <p><i>Revised draft [Framework Strategy(ies)] based on comments by SOM21</i></p>	<p>Draft [SWFS] commented or agreed by the SOM</p>	<p>EMG Sec</p>
<p>October 2015</p>	<p><i>Draft [Framework Strategy(ies)] presented in a report by the ED of UNEP to the Secretary of the UNEA</i> for advanced consideration of the CPR</p> <p><i>Progress Report on the [Framework Strategy(ies)] to the CPR</i></p>	<p>Draft [SWFS] submitted to SGB for advanced consideration of CPR</p> <p>CPR is informed on the progress made</p>	<p>EMG Sec</p>

<p>November-2015 March 2016</p>	<p><i>Submission of the draft [Framework Strategy(ies)] to the UN System Chief Executives Board</i> for Coordination and its High- level committees, namely the UN Development Group, the High Level Committee on Programmes and the High Level Committee on Management, at their respective spring meetings in 2016,;</p>	<p>Draft [Framework Strategy(ies)] distributed to CEB, for consideration.</p>	<p>EMG Sec</p>
<p>April 2016</p>	<p><i>Submission of the final proposal for the [Framework Strategy(ies)] to the Secretary of the UNEA</i></p>	<p>Final [Framework Strategy(ies)] distributed to MS as part of documents for UNEA2</p>	<p>EMG Sec and the UNEP team</p>
<p>June 2016</p>	<p><i>[Framework Strategy(ies)] considered and approved by the UNEA2</i></p> <p>UNEA adopts the [Framework Strategy(ies)] as its own resolution, and as a draft resolution of the GA for its consideration and endorsement at its 2016 fall session (i.e. 71st session).</p>	<p>[SWFS] approved by the UNEA2</p>	<p>UNEP Team supported by the EMG Sec</p>
<p>September 2016</p>	<p><i>[Framework Strategy(ies)] considered and endorsed by the 71st session of the UNGA</i></p> <p>EMG SOM22 agrees on the modalities for follow up of the [Framework Strategy(ies)] and reporting on its implementation</p> <p>(Parties and governing bodies of the MEAs and other EMG members can be informed of the outcome of the Process as appropriate)</p>	<p>[SWFS] endorsed by the GA</p>	<p>EMG Sec UNEP team UNEP NY</p>

Budget

The activities suggested in the work plan will be supported with in-kind support from EMG members, including in the form of meeting participation, provision of information and other material, and preparation and review of draft text for reports and outreach contributions. The EMG Secretariat will bear the costs pertaining to the organization of meetings, collection and compilation of information, and preparation of the discussions papers as well as progress reports. UNEP bears the costs for the data analysis, research, desk study, preparation of the outline of the [Framework Strategy(ies)], development of the [Framework Strategy(ies)] and the overall substantive servicing of the meetings of the process.

The tentative operational budget includes the following main activities and estimated costs:

Activities	Estimated costs (in 1000 USD)
Technical support through consultants for the preparation of a UN system-wide [Framework Strategy(ies)] on the Environment (including solicitation of expert contributions, coordination, operation of interactive web-site, compilation of drafts, editing and preparation of vital graphics)	80
Organization of meetings and facilitation of participation of experts to the meetings	10
Communication, outreach , possible web-based time information exchange, Lay-out, printing and distribution of the outcomes of the process	10
Total estimated cost	100