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**High-level Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group
on an Intergovernmental Strategic Plan for
Technology Support and Capacity-building**
First session
New York, 25 June 2004

Report of the Chair

Introduction

1. In pursuance of decision SS.VIII/1 of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), adopted in Jeju, Republic of Korea, on 31 March 2004, the first session of the High-level Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on an Intergovernmental Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building was convened at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on 25 June 2004.

Item 1: Opening of the session

2. The President of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum of UNEP, Mr. Arcadio Ntagazwa, opened the meeting at 10.25 a.m. on 25 June 2004. In his introductory remarks, he provided the background of the establishment of the Working Group, highlighting the outcomes of the relevant intergovernmental processes since the seventh special session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum of UNEP held in Cartagena, Colombia in February 2002. He referred to the extensive mandate of UNEP in regard to technology support and capacity-building and stressed that the Working Group should address its work from a UNEP perspective. He emphasized the need to take a holistic approach in discussing technology support and capacity-building. He pointed out the importance of considering not only north-south cooperation but also south-south cooperation in addressing this matter.

3. The following Governments were represented at the meeting, including four represented at the ministerial level: Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Belarus, Burundi, Canada, Colombia, China, Costa Rica, Burkina Faso, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Holy See, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Italy, Ireland, Jamaica, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Luxemburg, Malaysia, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Nepal, New Zealand, Portugal, Palau, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand,

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Turkey, Tuvalu, United Kingdom, United States, United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela and Zimbabwe.

4. Representatives of the following organizations were also present at the meeting: Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN/DESA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), World Bank and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Item 2: **Organizational matters**

5. The President informed the Working Group that since the Group was an inter-sessional subsidiary body of the Governing Council, the rules and procedures of the Governing Council would apply to its work, *mutatis mutandis*. He expressed his intention to chair all its meetings and lead the process throughout. The representatives at the Working Group agreed to this procedure, and it was therefore decided that the President would serve as the Chair of the Working Group.

(a) Adoption of the agenda

6. The Working Group adopted the following agenda, as contained in document UNEP/IEG/IGSP/1/1:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Organization of work:
 - (a) Adoption of the agenda;
 - (b) Organizational matters.
3. Preparation of a draft intergovernmental strategic plan for technology support and capacity building.
4. Other matters.
5. Closure of the meeting.

(b) Organization of work

7. The Chair proposed the order of the proceedings of the present session, starting with introductory remarks by the Executive Director and the reports of the preparatory work of the Committee of the Permanent Representatives to UNEP, as well as reports of expert and civil society consultations, followed by interventions of Governments, United Nations bodies and agencies and other relevant organizations. The Working Group agreed to this proposal.

8. The Chair mentioned that two further sessions of the Working Group were planned, the second in Nairobi, Kenya, in September 2004, and the third in Indonesia, in December 2004. As a number of Governments had requested a review of the dates for the second meeting, he asked the representatives to hold informal consultations on alternative dates and he would revisit the matter under agenda item 4.

9. The Chair also proposed that two facilitators be designated to assist him in the negotiating process that would commence at the second session of the Working Group in Nairobi. The Working Group agreed that Ms. Idunn Eidheim (Norway) and Mr. Bagher Asadi (Islamic Republic of Iran) would serve as the co-facilitators for future sessions of the Working Group.

Item 3: **Preparation of a draft intergovernmental strategic plan for technology support and capacity building**

10. In his opening remarks, the Executive Director of UNEP, Mr. Klaus Töpfer, introduced the documentation prepared for the meeting. He outlined the UNEP mandate in regard to technology support and capacity-building, and reported that a full inventory of activities of UNEP in these areas would soon be made available. He stressed the importance of involving the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in those areas, and stated that he had undertaken efforts to fully involve those organizations at a senior level. He also reported on the ongoing work of the Environment Management Group, details of which would be made available to the second session of the Working Group.

11. The Executive Director highlighted the guiding principles under which the United Nations system had addressed capacity-building, and enumerated areas where UNEP had been involved through its work programme, not only in capacity-building, but also in technology support. Those areas included such areas as: environmental monitoring, assessment and information systems; formulation and development of environmental policy; water, rivers and lake basins management; support to the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements; environmental law and institution-building; environmental assessment of disasters and post-conflict areas; management of chemicals and wastes; oceans, regional seas and coastal zones; biological diversity and biosafety; and land and forests. He added that health and environment linkages, trade and environment, changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, as well as alternative energy sources were additional areas receiving much attention, and that UNEP regional offices were well placed to pursue implementation through the identification of regional priorities, including those of vulnerable groups of countries such as small island developing states.

12. Mr. Carlos Gamba, Permanent Representative of Colombia to UNEP, and Mr. Andrew Kiptoon, Permanent Representative of Kenya to UNEP, reported on the outcome of deliberations by the Working Group of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP on this subject, in their respective capacities as the chair and the rapporteur of that Group, and presented the report of the Group as contained in document UNEP/IEG/IGSP/1/2, including a set of relevant guiding questions and a number of pertinent issues, such as system-wide implications, the importance of regional dimensions in identifying needs and for implementation, and the financing requirements of a future intergovernmental strategic plan. Many delegations subsequently took the floor and expressed their thanks to the Committee of Permanent Representatives for its valuable contribution and the analysis provided in its report.

13. The outcome of the deliberations at the expert consultation on this subject, held in Geneva on 17 and 18 June 2004, was reported by Mr. Philippe LePrestre, University of Quebec at Montreal. He presented a summary of the views expressed by experts at the consultation. He underscored the need to identify the principles as well as the implications of the future strategic plan. He emphasized the importance of clearly defining the conceptual approach of technology support and capacity-building, including the need to address potential synergies with multilateral environmental agreements. He also stressed the need to base recommendations on available research and to make use of academic institutions and best practices databases. In this regard there was a need to foster innovation, but also to bear in mind the limitations of information technology capacities in developing countries. He mentioned that technology support should be considered not only at the global level, but also in regional and national contexts where specific requirements might exist.

14. Ms. Georgina Ayre from the Stakeholder Forum for Our Common Future reported the outcome of the civil society consultations held in Nairobi, 21-22 June 2004. She outlined key recommendations emerged from the civil society consultations. She stressed the need to address a “beneficiaries’ perspective” and to ensure that efforts are demand-driven. National ownership was essential, as capacity-building should have an impact on financial, human and institutional resources. Gender mainstreaming, transparency, accountability, and responsiveness were values that should be guiding principles in the strategic plan.

15. The representative of Pakistan, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, stated that the future intergovernmental strategic plan should be supportive of the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and internationally agreed development goals. He recalled that the UNEP mandate in technology support and capacity-building originated from General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 15 December 1972. He recalled that the relevant mandate of UNEP was contained in various chapters of Agenda 21, and had been endorsed by intergovernmental conferences and processes. He

stressed that the future intergovernmental strategic plan must be action-oriented and have a long-term vision. Technology support should include the transfer and promotion technologies. He stated that the strategic plan should be UNEP-specific and should not adversely impact on the mandates of other United Nations entities, although there should be close cooperation with other actors within the United Nations system. Regional initiatives, such as NEPAD, must be taken on board and the strengthening of the environmental component of sustainable development should assist governments in mainstreaming the environment into national sustainable development plans. He added that the strategic plan should strengthen national institutions, assist countries in complying with international environmental agreements and support delegations in their preparation for international negotiations. An annual follow-up process should be institutionalized, through which evaluation of the strategic plan could be conducted.

16. The representative of Ireland, speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the future intergovernmental strategic plan should be closely linked to the goals contained in the Millennium Declaration and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. It should address the activities of UNEP, but take into account the activities undertaken by various multilateral environmental agreements and the rest of the United Nations system in the field of the environment. A comprehensive inventory of UNEP activities, with an assessment of work being done by others in various sectoral areas, would be useful in determining where needs and gaps existed. The strategic plan should therefore build on existing activities and not result in new initiatives for which intergovernmental endorsement had not been provided. It would be important to fully utilize UNEP regional offices, in cooperation with UNDP, when the strategic plan is implemented. Inputs from civil society and the private sector should be welcomed, and the plan should contribute to national priorities included in national sustainable development and poverty reduction strategies. Within a broader United Nations context, care should be taken to avoid duplication and to ensure that the strategic plan could serve as a platform for improved inter-agency cooperation and complement the work of other agencies and instruments. Closer coordination could also be achieved through the United Nations Development Group and the Environment Management Group. Linking the outputs of the strategic plan with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and common country assessments would be essential in meeting development priorities of countries. In that context, national ownership was stressed, and the plan should take into account the specific needs of countries and regions. She also mentioned that early finalization of the memorandum of understanding between UNDP and UNEP should serve to distinguish their respective areas of work in capacity-building initiatives.

17. Following these interventions, the representatives from Argentina, Australia, Canada, China, Colombia, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Peru, Russian Federation, Samoa, South Africa, Switzerland and the United States of America took the floor and expressed their respective views on a broad range of relevant issues.

18. In general, the representatives at the meeting supported the development of the intergovernmental strategic plan recognizing the UNEP mandate in the areas of technology support and capacity-building. Many representatives reiterated the existing legislative mandates and pointed out that UNEP in technology support and capacity-building should be undertaken in the context of sustainable development. They were of the view that the intergovernmental strategic plan should support the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the international development goals contained in the Millennium Declaration.

19. It was noted that such activities should be demand-driven and have national ownership. In that regard, many representatives stressed that environmental considerations should be included in Common Country Assessments and poverty reduction strategy papers. Both institutional and human resource capacities should be developed. While noting an important focus on the national level, many representatives underscored the need for regional and subregional perspectives. The role of UNEP regional offices, in cooperation with UNDP country offices, was also highlighted in identifying specific needs and implementation. In this regard some representatives proposed an enhanced role for UNDP resident representatives, in support of UNEP activities, and a few cautioned against the opening of country offices by UNEP. A number of representatives also enquired about the status of a possible memorandum of understanding between UNEP and UNDP, and stated that it should serve to enhance complementarities between the two organizations. Some representatives believed that coordination between the Global Environment Facility and its three implementing agencies could be improved.

20. Many representatives stressed that current capacity-building efforts in the United Nations system were too fragmented and that better coordination was required. Whereas the mandates of all agencies and programmes, as well as those of multilateral environmental agreements, should be respected, it was necessary to consider a coordinating mechanism to ensure that duplication was avoided. Some

representatives stated that a new inter-agency arrangement should be established for this purpose, while other representatives stated that the United Nations Development Group should be better utilized for this purpose. One representative proposed that UNEP should establish and lead a task force in the United Nations Development Group on environmental capacity-building. Some representatives believed that the Environment Management Group should coordinate those areas.

21. Regarding specific areas of focus, some representatives cited UNEP involvement in the development of the environmental component of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) as a good example of regional support. Other representatives stated that UNEP should further increase its work on strengthening the capacity of the judiciaries of countries and compliance with international obligations, through the environmental law programmes of UNEP. Certain thematic areas, such as water, science and assessment, oceans and regional seas, chemicals management, changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production and combating land degradation were also highlighted as areas where UNEP had been successfully involved in capacity-building. One representative stated that internal coordination among the various divisions within UNEP could be improved, while another representative believed that technology support and capacity-building should be undertaken by all UNEP divisions.

22. Many representatives believed that the intergovernmental strategic plan should result in a continuous effort, with time-bound goals that could be measured, and with a long-term strategic vision. Some representatives were of the opinion that a monitoring mechanism for the plan should be established. Many representatives believed that the intergovernmental strategic plan should be finalized by the twenty-third session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, which should undertake an annual review of the implementation of the plan. A number of representatives stressed that civil society and the private sector should be involved in the development and implementation of the plan. Many representatives also stressed that the plan should be funded adequately, from additional resources. Such financing should not be detrimental to the UNEP Environment Fund. One delegation stated that more funding from the United Nations regular budget was required in order to release programmatic resources for capacity-building initiatives. Some representatives stated that the funding of the plan should be voluntary.

23. Representatives of CBD, UNDP, UN/DESA, the World Bank and UNFCCC also made interventions and reported on their activities in technology support and capacity-building, referring also to examples and funds being utilized. They stressed the need for coordination between United Nations bodies and believed that initiatives should form part of the broader integration of such activities throughout the United Nations. It was mentioned that while each member of the United Nations system had its own mandate and funding, cooperation and collaboration were essential to avoid duplication and ensure optimum use of the resources available.

24. In concluding the discussions on this agenda item, the Chair provided a brief summary of the trends that he had noted during the meeting, which is shown in the annex to the present report.

25. In his closing remarks, the Executive Director expressed appreciation for the helpful suggestions from the representatives and stated that the outcome of the meeting would assist the secretariat in the future preparation of documentation. He referred to a number of examples of UNEP collaboration within the United Nations system and stressed that UNEP activities were aimed at the enhanced delivery of capacity-building for its clients.

Item 4: **Other matters**

26. With regard to the date of the second session of the Working Group, after hearing the views of a number of regional groups and representatives, the representatives wished to change the originally scheduled date of the meeting of 6-8 September 2004. Representatives considered instead the options of either 1-3 September or 13-15 September 2004. While the representatives noted that the latter date would coincide with the opening of the fifty-ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly and the UN-HABITAT World Urban Forum, the Working Group endorsed the date of 13-15 September 2004.

27. The Chair said that the report of the meeting would be in the form of a report of the Chair, and it would be made available within a few weeks. He invited Governments to submit written comments to the Executive Director by 16 July 2004. On the basis of the discussions at the present meeting, and taking into account other inputs provided to this process, as well as further comments that might be received from Governments, he would produce a paper containing “building blocks” for the future intergovernmental strategic plan, in consultation with the other members of the Bureau of the Governing Council. Such a “building blocks” paper would be circulated through the Executive Director to Governments in early August 2004.

Item 5: Closure of the meeting

28. At the closure of the meeting, the Executive Director expressed his appreciation to all the participants, especially to Ministers and other national experts, for their contribution towards its success.

29. The Chair also expressed his appreciation to all those present at the meeting, and declared the meeting closed at 5.45 p.m.

Annex

Chairman's informal summary of trends emerging from the meeting

1. A number of specific proposals were made by various delegations and would be taken into account by the Executive Director.
 2. There was a clear intergovernmental mandate for UNEP to develop a strategic plan.
 3. The need was expressed for such a plan to have adequate funding, a long-term vision/approach, as well as clear and measurable targets and goals.
 4. The plan should aim at providing a strategic direction for technology support and capacity-building for the environmental pillar of sustainable development.
 5. Country ownership was emphasized, as well as the applicability of elements of the strategic plan to regional and subregional levels.
 6. UNEP should coordinate its technology support and capacity-building activities within the United Nations system, involving all relevant actors.
 7. There was a clear need for UNEP to have better cooperation with UNDP, especially at the country level and through resident representatives.
 8. UNEP and the other two Global Environment Facility implementing agencies should seek to coordinate activities, so as to avoid duplication and to achieve a more efficient utilization of the available resources.
 9. Technology support should be responsive to local demands and applicable to specific requirements, and should not be limited to a simple transfer.
 10. The strategy should contribute to the Common Country Assessments/United Nations Development Assistance Framework process through the Resident Coordinator System.
 11. Tailor-made and differentiated approaches were required at the regional level.
 12. A number of specific substantive areas were identified for the plan to focus on.
 13. The importance of efforts to strengthen national environmental institutions was stressed, with greater emphasis on training and education.
 14. The plan should be based on needs assessment and national ownership.
 15. A clearer definition of capacity-building and technology support and the mandate and role of UNEP was needed.
 16. Implementation modalities, including concrete elements, work plan, time-schedule and financing arrangements should be clearly defined.
 17. A more effective approach to the development of partnerships should be considered, including partnerships with the private sector.
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