



Environmental Management Group (EMG)

9th Meeting of the Environmental Management Group

International Environment House, Geneva, Switzerland, 08 November
2004

2:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

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NOTE

on the Preparation of a Consolidated UN System Input to the Work of the High Level Intergovernmental Working Group on an Intergovernmental Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building

Prepared for discussion by the Issue Management Group on environmental capacity building

Summary: This paper is meant to provide a basis for discussion at the first meeting of the UNEP/UNDP issue management group to provide a UN system consolidated input to the third meeting of the High Level Intergovernmental Working Group on an Intergovernmental Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building (IGSP).

The aim is to stimulate a discussion on the interagency aspects of the Plan,

- *reviewing the governments' needs and expectations from the UN system and the input provided by the EMG to the Second IGSP,*
- *identifying and providing additional information on the work of the UN system in the area of environmental capacity building to the 3rd IGSP meeting in December 2004,*
- *and developing a UN system consolidated input on the potentials of the Strategic Plan in enhancing the UN system environmental capacity building activities .*

It is hoped that the IMG at its first meeting could agree on the outline/structure of the consolidated input, on the basis of which the EMG Secretariat will attempt to develop a draft document which will include the required additional inputs to be provided by the IMG members.

1. Background

The eighth special session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum in its decision SS.VIII/1 decided “to establish a high-level open-ended intergovernmental working group of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum with the mandate to prepare an intergovernmental strategic plan for technology support and capacity-building for its consideration at its twenty-third session.” In the same decision it requested the Executive Director “to make available relevant reports, including an inventory of existing capacity building and technology support activities of the United Nations Environment Programme and of other relevant

international organizations, to assist the high-level working group, as necessary, noting that the Environmental Management Group could play an active role in that regard.”

In response to these requests, the Environmental Management Group decided to provide the following contributions as an input to the High Level Working Group:

1. The two situation/needs analyses on capacity building in the areas of biological diversity and chemicals, which provide an overview of the UN system activities in two specific areas; and
2. through an Issue Management Group (IMG), under the co-chairmanship of UNEP and UNDP, to provide a further broad perspective to the process with regard to the work of UN agencies and organisations.

As a first step for the work of this issue management group, the EMG Secretariat compiled an inventory of the mandates, roles and activities of the EMG member organisations in this area. The EMG at its 8th meeting on 1 September 2004 decided to transmit this outline to the second meeting of the High Level Working Group with the understanding that this was as a living document, which needed further input and consolidation.

It was also agreed that the IMG should continue its work, bearing in mind the discussions of the second IGSP meeting, and prepare the required input for the utilization of the third session of the Intergovernmental Process.

2. Issues raised in the 2nd IGSP meeting with relevance to the coordination of capacity building and technology support activities of the UN system

At the second meeting of the High level Working Group numerous references were made to strengthened cooperation between UNEP and other agencies engaged in environmental capacity building, both as an objective for the establishment of the Intergovernmental Strategic Plan and in its implementation process.¹ Although there is not yet agreed

¹ The Report of the Chair on the Second Session of the High-level open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group (UNEP/IEG/IGSP/2/4) of 14 September 2004 notes the following:

‘Several representatives emphasized the need for the plan to facilitate coordination between existing capacity-building activities and to foster closer cooperation between UNEP, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements and other stakeholders. There was general agreement that capacity-building efforts in the United Nations system to date had been too ad hoc and fragmented. The need for efforts to build on existing capacity was underlined repeatedly. A number of representatives urged greater emphasis on capacity-building within national frameworks, including poverty reduction strategy papers and United Nations development assistance frameworks’. (paragraph 22)

‘...It was pointed out that the strategic plan should help UNEP and other organizations that were conducting activities relating to technology support and capacity-building in the field of the environment to avoid unnecessary overlapping of activities and enhance coordination and cooperation among them. In this connection, it was said that the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) should continue to carry out its mandate of coordinating activities in the field of

language, and governments' views on the objectives and implementation of the Plan will be further discussed and negotiated at the third meeting of the High level Working Group, there was a clear message that coordination, collaboration and synergies among activities of different organisations should be addressed in the Plan.

The above issues include:

- I. An overview of existing UN system environmental capacity building activities, including existing cooperative frameworks and partnerships
- II. UN organizations' self assessment (overview) of their environment related capacity building activities (challenges, experiences, lessons learned)
- III. Assessment of the functioning of the existing cooperative frameworks (including challenges, experiences and lessons learned)
- IV. Approaches for future action and cooperation
- V. UN system input on the Strategic Plan and its role in enhancing the UN work on environment related capacity building.

3. The Response of the UN System (Outline of the IMG report)

I. An overview of existing UN system environmental capacity building activities, including the existing cooperative frameworks, partnerships

Information available:

1. *Two draft studies on capacity building for biological diversity and for chemicals management, providing an overview of activities in two specific areas.*
(Both studies will be finalized by 15 October for transmission to the third IGSP meeting in Bali.)
2. *Outline of UN Activities and Initiatives on Environment Related Capacity Building and Technology Support*

The information provided by EMG members shows that there is virtually no issue on the environment and sustainable development agenda which is not addressed

development support in the United Nations system and that the technology support and capacity-building activities of UNEP should form part of UNDG activities, with UNEP possibly taking a lead role on environment related matters. It was suggested that UNEP should evaluate existing activities and coordinate them more effectively, prioritizing them in order to optimize results, and should use the limited available resources efficiently and effectively. In addition, UNEP should play a central role in the coordination of activities during the implementation of the plan'. (paragraph 25).

by capacity building efforts. However, it is not possible on the basis of the information received to identify particular areas of concentration or gaps in terms of substantive or geographical coverage. While some organisations have provided a rather detailed description of their programmes or even projects, others have given a broad overview of their strategic approach and activities without identifying the main areas or geographical coverage of their activities.

Suggestion: IMG members should provide additional factual information to the EMG Secretariat on their main area(s) of capacity building and technology support, identifying which area of focus is addressed as well as the geographical coverage.

3. *Further input on other specific areas, following the approach of the biodiversity and chemicals management studies, could be prepared.*

II. UN Organizations self assessment (overview) on their environment related capacity building activities (challenges, experience, lessons learned)

Suggestion: IMG members should provide available information on such self assessments to the EMG Secretariat

III. Assessment of the functioning of the existing cooperative frameworks including challenges, experiences and lessons learned

Information provided for the outline of UN activities mentioned above shows that in terms of coordinating arrangements, there is a variety of informal and formal mechanisms and tools, like dialogue among like-minded institutions, the Joint Liaison Group of the Rio Conventions, a joint FAO/IAEA division, strategic partnerships or the Resident Coordinator System and the UNDAF at the country level, to name just a few.

The findings from the two EMG studies in the areas of capacity building for chemicals management and biological diversity seem to suggest that most arrangements for information exchange and coordination are of a vertical nature, promoting cooperation in a specific area. There seems to be a need for coordinating arrangements, which allow to strengthen linkages across different sectors (horizontal approach).

Suggestion: IMG members should inform if they have done any such assessments with their partner organizations, which could be made available to the EMG Secretariat

IV. Approaches for future action and cooperation

Conclusions from the IMG's work as described above

V. UN system input on the Strategic Plan and its role in enhancing the UN work on environment related capacity building

The IMG should discuss the added value of the Strategic Plan in enhancing members' activities:

Major areas where the Plan might be of benefit to the IMG members could include:

- Coordinated approach on country self assessments of needs,
- Coordinated approach in assessing the environment related capacity building activities,
- Coordinated approach in better planning of future activities
- Establishing a common framework or platform for enhanced exchange of information, lessons learned and experiences, with the aim to contribute to a balanced, effective and coordinated implementation of activities and to promote synergies
- Other areas.