



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.

Document EMG 9/4

DRAFT 29.10.04

Report of the Work of the Environmental Management Group to the 23rd Session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum

I. Introduction

1. The seventh special session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, in its decision SS.VII/1 of 15 February 2002 entitled ‘International Environmental Governance’, adopted the report of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Ministers or Their Representatives on International Environmental Governance containing the recommendations on the subject of strengthening international environmental governance.

With regard to the EMG, the report states that ‘for the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum to effectively play its policy role, it requires an instrument at the inter-agency level to enhance policy coordination across the environmental activities of the United Nations system. The Environmental Management Group is such an instrument and should be charged with reporting annually to the Forum, taking into account the provisions of General Assembly resolution 54/217, as well as on specific issues arising from the work of the United Nations system in the environmental area on which the Forum could make recommendations on the work of the Environmental Management Group.

2. The EMG presented a comprehensive report of its work to the eighth special session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (Document UNEP/GCSS.VIII/5/Add.2). In its decision GCSS.VIII/1 entitled ‘Implementation of decision SS.VII/1 on international environmental governance’ the Governing Council/Global Environment Forum decided to convey this report to the General Assembly for its consideration. In the same decision, the Executive Director was requested ‘to continue to promote coordination across the United Nations system on environmental activities, in particular those relevant to operations of the United Nations system, keeping in mind paragraphs 36 and 37 of decision SS.VII/1, through the work of the Environmental management Group.’

3. The Executive Director was further requested ‘to present a report on the matter to the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum at its twenty-third session, which should also include a comprehensive assessment of the location of the secretariat of the Environmental Management Group, taking into account, among other things, existing efforts to strengthen the United Nations Office at Nairobi, the headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme and the headquarters of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, as well as the mandate and membership of the Environmental Management Group.

4. The present report provides a summary of the work undertaken by the EMG under its work programme 2004/2005, and outlines a medium-term strategy for its further development. Finally, it addresses the issue of the location of the Secretariat in Annex ...

II. Institutional Background

5. The Environmental Management Group (EMG) was established by the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the purpose of enhancing UN system-wide inter-agency coordination in the field of environment and human settlements. It is a central outcome of the endorsement by the General Assembly, in resolution 53/242 of 28 July 1999, of a comprehensive series of measures designed to enhance coherent action within the UN system in these areas, as recommended by the Secretary-General in his report on Environment and Human Settlements (A/53/463). The establishment of the EMG was further endorsed in General Assembly resolution 54/217 of 22 December 1999.

6. The EMG's mandate was confirmed in the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, in its chapter XI entitled "Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development", paragraph 140, subparagraph (b). It states that the international community should "Strengthen collaboration within and between the United Nations system, international financial institutions, the Global Environment Facility and the World Trade Organization", utilizing, among others, the Environmental Management Group.

III. Mandate and structure of the EMG

7. The EMG seeks to strengthen inter-agency co-operation through an issues-management and problem-solving approach. It aims to find solutions to important and newly emerging issues on the environment and human settlements agenda and to foster joint action.

8. The EMG's terms of reference were endorsed by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) in 1999, following a process of consultation carried out through the ACC's Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD) and UNEP's Committee of Permanent Representatives in Nairobi. The terms of reference design the EMG as a flexible mechanism, only meeting when required to facilitate a timely approach to addressing emerging issues and integrate knowledge available in the UN system. They also establish a two-tiered structure for the Group: a senior-level decision-making body, entitled the Environmental Management Group, chaired by the Executive Director of UNEP and consisting of senior-level officials from member organizations of the Group, and time-bound ad hoc issue-management groups set up by the EMG. They will cease to exist after completion of their tasks. The Secretariat of the EMG is provided by UNEP.

9. Members of the EMG are the specialized agencies, programmes and organs of the United Nations system, including the secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements, as well as the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization.

IV. Programme of work 2004/2005

10. The EMG aims at making practical contributions to the implementation of the sustainable development agenda in the areas of environment and human settlements. It serves as an instrument for its members to share their views or concerns on issues of common interest, review progress, identify obstacles, and convey their views and recommendations to relevant intergovernmental forums, like the UNEP Governing Council, the Commission on Sustainable Development and the General Assembly.

11. The EMG has so far considered various issues including “harmonization of biodiversity-related reporting, environmental aspects of water, sanitation and human settlements and environment related capacity building, the results of which have been reported to the Eighth Special Session of the UNEP GC/GMEF in March 2004 and the CSD 12 in April 2004 (Document UNEP/GCSS.VIII/5/Add.2)

12. The two issues of environmental capacity building and sustainable procurement for the UN system have constituted the bulk of the EMG ‘s program of work in the year 2004:

ENVIRONMENTAL CAPACITY BUILDING

13. Guided by the WSSD Plan of Implementation which emphasizes the importance of capacity building in all areas of sustainable development and calls for better resourced, more effective, coordinated and complementary capacity building activities in poverty alleviation and sustainable development programs, the EMG at its 6th session in February 2004 decided to focus on environment-related capacity building activities of its members to identify the needs and gaps and the potential for further synergies and cooperation among UN agencies and with the Secretariats of the MEAs and to define its role in furthering such cooperation. Particularly, the EMG has focused on defining its role as a facilitator for more coordinated exchange of information and data on lessons learned, experiences and methodologies within the UN system and is exploring the possibility of establishing a resource library within the EMG framework.

14. To that end, two pilot situation/needs analyses in the areas of biodiversity and chemicals management capacity building were prepared in cooperation with UNEP/WCMC and UNITAR respectively.

Both studies provide a useful overview of relevant activities of UN agencies, related MEAs and other relevant organisations in these two areas. They were also transmitted as a contribution of the EMG to the third meeting of the High-level Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group for an Intergovernmental Strategic Plan on Technology Support and Capacity Building, which took place in Bali/Indonesia in December 2004.

Main findings of the study on capacity building for biological diversity

15. The study shows that capacity building is a core element of agencies and MEAs’ programmes and activities in the area of biological diversity. In addition, in many cases, there are specific programmes and projects aimed at capacity building. Capacity building efforts address

the need for capacity development at the individual, the institutional and the overarching systemic level.

16. Capacity building activities include a wide range of methods, such as training courses and workshops, information material and websites. Often, specific strategies or action plans or even regional centres for capacity building have been established or are envisaged, mirroring the importance that has been allocated to capacity building. Capacity building is further supported by specific awards, funding, direct advice and assistance from agencies to national stakeholders, or information clearing-houses. Gathering and making available local knowledge on biodiversity is an important part of capacity building efforts.

17. Capacity building is an important element in strategic plans, work programmes, work plans and other strategic documents of biodiversity-related MEAs. It is also frequently covered by joint work plans of conventions. MEAs have included capacity building as a focus for funding in funding-related provisions.

18. Many biodiversity projects, including those supporting the implementation of biodiversity-related treaties, aim at capacity building or have capacity building as a core element. In effect, capacity building at the local, national and regional level is receiving high funding attention.

19. There is a wide range of experiences and lessons to share on capacity building within UN agencies and MEAs which are not necessarily easily accessible. A number of them is presented in the study, relating to issues like partners' ownership and leadership, multi-stakeholder involvement, self assessment of needs, promotion of partnerships, learning-by-doing approaches and regional approaches.

20. The information available indicates a focus of UN agencies and MEAs' capacity building efforts on issues such as conservation of biological diversity, sustainable use, research and monitoring, outreach and public awareness, and legal, financial and institutional issues. Other areas such as biosafety and access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing are covered by a lower number of agencies.

21. There is a huge number of collaborative activities in the field of capacity building for biodiversity, involving not only UN agencies and conventions, but also non-governmental organisations, academia and business. Most of these activities are project-based and targeted at the national and local level. Funding has been focused strongly on such activities, particularly through the Global Environment Facility.

22. Horizontal cooperative frameworks for capacity building on biodiversity are currently very sparse throughout the UN system, resulting in a lack of facilities to make available and exchange information and share experiences and lessons. On a small scale, provisions in some of the joint work programmes between biodiversity-related conventions have the potential to develop into such frameworks. Some small-scale cooperative frameworks involving the biodiversity sector, but going beyond it to involve the development, climate change, desertification and trade sectors exist.

23. Combined with an apparent widespread lack of self-assessment of capacity building undertakings, a wider framework on capacity building for biodiversity does currently not exist. Such a framework would allow for making information on capacity building activities available to other agencies and for sharing experiences and useful lessons. The EMG could establish a permanent mechanism for this information sharing. The information exchange would enable agencies to plan their own capacity building efforts in a manner that avoids ill-defined approaches that other agencies might have experience with. In addition, high-quality information on effective capacity building approaches would enable the development of better policies.

Main findings of the study on capacity building for chemicals management

24. The study provides an overview of the existing policy framework, activities and coordinating arrangements in the area of chemicals management capacity building in the UN system. It features a summary of key international agreements and decisions affecting chemicals management capacity building, summarizes the organizational set-up and activities of international bodies involved and reviews the current status of co-ordinating mechanisms and information exchange mechanisms in this area. Finally, it suggests some issues for further information exchange and coordination and explores a possible role of the EMG.

25. The study analyses *existing international agreements* within the context of the elements for sound management of chemicals at the national level, as provided in Programme Area E of Chapter 19 (Section 19.56) of Agenda 21. These elements include adequate legislation; information gathering and dissemination; capacity for risk assessment and interpretation; establishment of risk management policy; capacity for implementation and enforcement; capacity for rehabilitation of contaminated sites and poisoned persons; effective education programmes; and capacity to respond to emergencies.

26. The analysis suggests that many of the agreements contain similar provisions related to core capacity elements, such as adequate legislation and information gathering and dissemination. There may, therefore, be opportunities for countries to consider and develop approaches, whereby concerned ministries work together in collaboration with stakeholders to ensure co-ordinated and coherent approaches. In addition to the elements referred to above, a “horizontal” review of international chemicals agreements reveals other potential areas for co-ordinated or synergetic approaches to capacity building. These include, for example, public participation and stakeholder involvement, integrated import control, or technology transfer.

27. A broad range of *UN organisations and mechanisms* are involved in capacity building for sound chemicals management. They receive their mandate through their governing bodies or the Conference of Parties for specific Conventions. The scope of the mandates, however, is often very broad thereby emphasizing the importance of coordination. Analysis of existing capacity building programmes suggests that a number of elements – such as adequate legislation – are the focus of the activities of various organisations. An enhanced exchange of experiences and co-ordination of related capacity building (e.g. guidance and training material development) might therefore be beneficial. A particular challenge for co-ordination is that several international organisations have regional offices which actively, and sometimes independently, are involved in chemicals management capacity building.

28. A number of *formal and informal mechanisms are in place to co-ordinate* chemicals management capacity building. However, an overview of the various groups, their purposes and members, does currently not exist. Many of the existing co-ordination or advisory groups are linked to specific convention-related capacity building initiatives or to specific projects. Co-ordination within thematic areas (e.g. capacity building for legislation) is currently not the focus of attention. In light of the growing interest in synergy development both at the international level and in countries, opportunities for co-ordination of thematic areas could be explored.

29. As far as *information exchange for chemicals management capacity building* is concerned, a number of mechanisms are in place to provide such information. In light of the growing importance of chemicals management capacity building, international bodies and processes – such as the IOMC, SAICM and the IGSP – would probably need to address how information on chemical management capacity building can be best facilitated and relevant activities co-ordinated.

30. While significant dialogue and information exchange takes place within the "chemicals" community, the challenge of linking and integrating chemicals management into other environmental issues (e.g. biodiversity) and mainstream development issues (e.g. gender issues, poverty eradication) has not yet been systematically addressed.

31. For January 2005, the IOMC has scheduled a Special Session on Capacity Building which will identify, review and address potential issues to strengthen information exchange and co-ordination in the area of chemicals management capacity building. Issues identified in this report prepared for the EMG relevant to the IOMC discussions in January, may include, for example:

- identification of opportunities to link chemical management issues to the mainstream development agenda and implementation of the Millennium Development Goals;
- strengthening co-ordination across “thematic areas” such as legislation development, or import control;
- development of a coherent approach to information exchange for chemicals management capacity building; and
- exploring opportunities to support countries in developing an Integrated National Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals.

32. Finally, the study identifies a number of areas where the EMG could provide value added. First, the EMG could facilitate discussions across sectors (e.g. the linkages between water issues and chemicals). Second, the EMG could facilitate exchange of experiences on issues of common interest to various UN organizations and sectors, such as exchange of experiences on methodologies for capacity self assessment, stakeholder involvement in project implementation, or mainstreaming sector specific capacity building. Third, the EMG may provide value added regarding an exchange of experience among various sectors about sector specific co-ordination arrangements.

SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT FOR THE UN SYSTEM

33. The need to work further on the inclusion of sustainable development considerations in procurement practices is recognized in Agenda 21 and in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (chapter III, paragraph 19), as well as by the International Expert Meeting on a 10-year-framework of programmes for sustainable consumption and production in June 2003, which recommended that 'the United Nations itself should adopt sustainable procurement and environmental management programmes for its offices and operations' (paragraph 154 of the meeting report).

34. Furthermore, in 2001 the Board of Auditors to the General Assembly suggested that UNEP take the initiative in bringing to the attention of the UN system Chief Executives Board (CEB) the possibility of developing a framework to implement the environmental policies in the UN system. This recommendation requests UNEP to develop a policy framework for managing its own operations in an environmentally friendly manner (recycling, energy consumption, environmental aspects in procurement etc.) and share it with the other organisations in the UN system.

35. Against this background, the EMG discussed how it could best assist in developing sustainable procurement policies and environmental management programmes throughout the UN system.

The Group noted that individual or joint initiatives have been taken by a number of UN agencies in order to include sustainable development in the criteria for procurement of goods and services. However, a coordinated system-wide policy on sustainable procurement is still lacking, and procedures vary widely among agencies, depending on operational requirements.

36. The Group established an Issue Management Group with UNEP/DTIE as the task manager in close cooperation with UNDP/IAPSO, the World Bank, UNOPS and the Interagency Procurement Working Group. The IMG will complete a survey on current regulations and activities and address work on developing supplier codes of conduct and the issue of training. The IMG will report back to the EMG in mid 2005. It will coordinate its activities with the work undertaken by the two working groups on facilities management and procurement set up for the internalization of the Global Compact Principles in the UN system, to avoid duplication and create synergies between these initiatives.

ISSUE MANAGEMENT GROUP ON A CONTRIBUTION TO THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL STRATEGIC PLAN ON TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

37. The EMG's work on environmental capacity building has also contributed to the implementation of UNEP GC decision SS.VIII/1 of 31 March 2004 on International Environmental Governance which requested, inter alia, the Executive Director to make available relevant reports, including an inventory of existing capacity building and technology support activities of UNEP and of other relevant international organizations, to assist the high level open-ended intergovernmental working group on an intergovernmental strategic plan for technology support and capacity building, as necessary.

38. The EMG decided to establish an Issue Management Group under the joint chairmanship of UNEP and UNDP with the objective to discuss the interagency aspects of the Plan and to develop a UN system consolidated input on the potentials of the potential of the Plan to enhance UN system environmental capacity building activities.

To be further developed after the IMG meeting on 8 November.

For comprehensive information on EMG and its current activities please refer to:
www.unemg.org.

V. Medium-term strategy and future activities

39. The Environmental Management Group serves as the United Nations system-wide mechanism to enhance inter-agency cooperation and coordination related to specific issues in the fields of environment and human settlements. The EMG will continue to provide a coordinated and flexible United Nations system response and to facilitate joint action with regard to specific of environment and human settlements issues, promote information exchange and contribute to synergy and complementarities between activities of its members.

(to be further developed in light of the findings of the EMG management study)

40. In accordance with its mandate, the EMG intends to further develop its work based on three pillars:

- Contributing to major intergovernmental processes aimed at progressing towards implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation
- Addressing specific issues in the areas of environment and human settlements which are of common interest to several or all EMG members
- Strengthening links with other formal or informal UN inter-agency frameworks, in particular HLCP/CEB and the undg, in order to ensure that environmental and human settlements concerns receive adequate attention and are fully integrated in the implementation of the larger sustainable development agenda.

41. The EMG will contribute to the deliberations of relevant intergovernmental forums in the areas of environment and sustainable development by providing coordinated approaches to specific issues addressed. In particular, the EMG will provide inputs to the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, to the UN-Habitat Governing Council and to the Commission on Sustainable Development. Through the UNEP Governing Council, the EMG will report to the UN General Assembly.

42. In terms of specific issues to be addressed, the EMG will continue its work on environment-related capacity building with the aim of enhancing exchange of information, best practices and experiences.

The outcomes of the pilot surveys in the areas of biological diversity and chemicals management have provided a good basis for continuation of this exercise in other areas such as climate change and desertification. As a further step, the EMG is currently examining options for establishing a UN system-wide framework for exchange of information and experiences. Creating a UN system-wide resource library on environmental capacity building could be one of the possible means.

43. The EMG is also prepared to provide further input to the IGSP intergovernmental process, if required.

44. The issue management group on sustainable procurement policies and environmental management programmes for the UN system has just been established and will report back to the EMG in mid 2005.

45. The EMG will provide a consolidated input to discussions at the next cycle of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD14/15 in 2006/2007). The EMG will start in 2005 to collect data and information from its members on best practices, lessons learned and possibly case studies. The focus will be on environmental aspects of the following issues:

- Air pollution including indoor air pollution/atmosphere
- Industrial practices with a focus on local and global emissions.

46. The EMG will furthermore address “The Urban Poverty – Environment Nexus: - understanding the nexus and its implications for environmental planning & management.” Urban poor and marginalised groups are often the most affected by environmental degradation, yet overwhelmingly excluded in decision-making affecting access to and use of environmental resources, levels and standards of environmental services – environmental institutional arrangements and legislation needs to recognise and help to change this fact. This topic would also include to discuss an 'Ecosystems' approach to more “sustainable urbanisation” – cities need to better situate themselves in wider ecosystems management; – how for example can urban planning practices better recognise and adapt/respond to the increasing “footprint” paradigm – city expansion and use of environmental resources, both for consumption and for disposal. City environmental balance (needs, pressures and responses) and the link between the urban and rural environment.

47. Finally, the EMG will further develop its cooperation with other inter-agency mechanisms, like UN Water, UN Energy or the IOMC, and establish closer links with the HLCP/CEB and the UNDG. It will continue its role as an interagency forum so as to assure mainstreaming of environmental and sustainable development considerations into the work of the UN.

VI. Functioning and location of the EMG Secretariat

To be developed on the basis of the EMG management study currently under way