



UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

Programme des Nations Unies pour l'environnement Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Medio Ambiente

Программа Организации Объединенных Наций по окружающей среде برنامج الأمم المتحدة للبيئة

联合国环境规划署



18th Senior Officials Meeting of the Environment Management Group

1 November 2012

Preparatory technical segment: 9.00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Senior officials segment: 3 – 6 p.m.

EMG/SOM.18/02

8 October 2012

Distribution: EMG members

LRC Room, 11th floor of the UNDP FF-building,
304 E 45th Street, New York, NY 10017.

Strategic Directions for EMG: Contribution to the Implementation of the Outcome Document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)

Note by the Chair

Introduction

1. The Senior officials, under agenda item 4, are invited to consider the overall strategic directions for the work of the Environment Management Group (EMG), in particular as it relates to its contributions to the follow up and implementation of the Outcome Document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) Rio+20: “The Future We Want”.
2. The Outcome Document in several places addresses the importance of cooperation and coherence of actions within the UN system in supporting the member states to achieve sustainable development. The implementation matrix proposed by the Secretary-General (SG) in his letter, of 2nd August 2012 to the Heads of UN agencies, lists those actions and responsibilities including those of the EMG in the context of its current activities. The SG underlined the importance of a systematic response by the UN system to the guidance and objectives set out in the Outcome Document.
3. Senior officials may want to consider the suggested areas of contribution by the EMG as contained in the SG’s matrix including on green economy, support to the implementation of the multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) on biodiversity and desertification and enhancing sustainability in the work of the UN. The Senior Officials may also wish to consider possible contributions of the EMG to the post Rio+20 follow up processes that might warrant a system-wide response including a system-wide input on the environmental dimension of the post 2015 development agenda and the elaboration of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
4. A strategic discussion and guidance of the Senior Officials on enhancing the sustainability measures in the internal work and operations of the UN system, of the future work of the EMG on UN sustainability related issues as well as environmental peer-reviews would be highly useful.
5. The Senior Officials may also want to discuss how the work of the EMG can better contribute and be linked to the agenda of the UN Chief Executives Board (CEB) and its subsidiary bodies, particularly in view of the Rio+20 follow up.
6. Senior Officials in their discussion of the strategic directions for EMG, are invited to consider the following three broad key questions:

A. How should EMG's ongoing work be furthered so as to contribute to the MEAs and the implementation of the Rio+20 Outcome Document?

7. Through its IMG on green economy, EMG has prepared a UN system-wide report providing a multi-sectoral perspective and common messaging on the issue, with input from some 40 agencies. The report shows that the UN entities, along with the Bretton Woods Institutions and other intergovernmental agencies, are well-positioned to support a transition towards a balanced and inclusive green economy at the national level where they can provide a range of technical advice and capacity support to governments. The Outcome Document invites a coordinated UN system-wide contribution “to support developing countries upon request to achieve sustainable development, including through, inter alia, green economy policies in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, in particular in least developed countries”.

8. EMG is considered as one of the responsible actors in the SG's implementation matrix for contribution to this element of the Outcome Document. Senior Officials may want to consider the niche and directions for a continued EMG cooperation in assisting countries in their transition towards a green and inclusive economy. The IMG on Green Economy has suggested some specific recommendations for consideration of the Senior Officials.

9. Senior Officials may also want to consider how EMG's work on drylands and biodiversity could contribute to the implementation of the relevant elements of the Outcome Document. Development of an Action Plan to implement the EMG report “Global Drylands” would frame a common agenda for action on drylands management in addressing climate change and food security through a positive drylands development and investment approach. EMG's report “Advancing the biodiversity agenda – a UN system-wide contribution”, has allowed the UN system to now gear its effort towards supporting the implementation of the Aichi Targets of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 through a global mapping report as well as strategic approach for national and regional cooperation including the support to the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs).

B. How can EMG's work on the framework for social and environmental sustainability (including on environmental sustainability in management) contribute to the implementation of the Rio+20 Outcome Document?

10. Senior Officials at their 17th meeting approved the report including the Framework on Enhancing Environmental and Social Sustainability. The Framework provides a holistic view of the UN system work from policy conception through programme implementation and internal operations management, and proposes steps for moving the UN towards a coherent approach to sustainability. The Framework proposes: 1) a common vision, rationale and objective; 2) a roadmap that can provide an operational model to enable individual actions to be taken by each UN entity to internalize environmental and social sustainability measures; and 3) collective actions to be undertaken for the system, such as knowledge sharing, further clarifying the Framework and options for common reporting.

11. The report was presented by the EMG Chair to the preparatory process of the UNCSD, the Chief Executives Board (CEB) as well as its High level Committees on Program and Management (HLCP and HLCM) in their Spring Sessions in 2012. The HLCP welcomed the Report and the Sustainability Framework and agreed on the need for the UN system to capitalize on efforts of the EMG and a commitment by the UN system to implement the Framework. The HLCM took note of the Report, with a view to reviewing it in connection with its financial and other implications related to management, following consideration of the Report by the CEB at its Spring 2012 session.

12. The Outcome Document in its paragraphs 91-96 invites the UN system “to further enhance mainstreaming of sustainable development in their respective mandates,

programs, strategies and decision-making processes, in support of all countries in particular developing countries' efforts in the achievement of sustainable development.” Paragraph 94 underlines an invitation that; “We invite the governing bodies of the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the UN development system to consider appropriate measures for integrating the social, economic and environmental dimensions across the UN System’s operational activities.” Paragraph 96 also mentions; “We call on the UN system to improve the management of facilities and operations, by taking into account sustainable development practices, building on existing efforts and promoting cost effectiveness, and in accordance with legislative frameworks, including financial rules and regulations, while maintaining accountability to Member States.”

The Senior Officials may want to consider the proposed workplan prepared by the EMG Consultative Process on Environmental and Social Sustainability for further elaboration of the Framework and for preparing a roadmap that provides an implementation and operational model that can be adapted and used by individual UN entities.

13. One of the three entry points of the Framework is at the practical level of internal management: “procedures and practices for integrating environmental and social considerations into management practices and support systems for UN operations, premises, travel, procurement, and use of information technology which contributes to sustainable development”. The UN system has already made good progress towards environmental sustainability management through the Secretary-General’s Climate Neutral initiative. Senior Officials approved in September 2011 a Strategic Plan for Sustainability Management in the UN System by which they have committed “to move towards the introduction of organisation-specific sustainability management systems and to endeavour to identify appropriate resources for implementation”. The Secretary-General, in a letter to Executive Heads dated 13 June 2012, draws the attention of CEB members to the Strategic Plan and to the need to strengthen the efforts already underway both at individual organisation and system levels.

14. The EMG Senior Officials may want to consider options for supporting the implementation of the sustainable management systems through a Common Sustainability Office (CSO).

15. The Senior Officials may want also to consider options for peer-review of environmental profiles of the UN system in follow up of its decision last year and the preparation of the options paper: “Peer reviewing the environmental profile of members of the EMG, a conceptual review of options”.

C. How can the EMG contribute to the post Rio+20 processes including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

16. The EMG supported the preparatory process of the Rio+20 by providing system-wide perspectives on green economy, drylands, biodiversity and sustainability in the UN system for enhancing cooperation and strengthening the Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development. The Rio+20 has launched several processes for enhancing sustainable development including on financing, technology transfer, SDGs, measuring sustainable development and, sustainable consumption and production, for the follow up of which it has called for a UN system-wide contribution and cooperation.

17. The Senior Officials may want to consider possible contributions that EMG can make in response to any request arising from the follow up processes of the Rio+20. For example, in response to paragraph 255¹ on the SDG process, the Senior Officials may consider a technical

¹ 255. We agree to establish an intergovernmental process under the United Nations General Assembly, with technical support from the UN System, and in open and broad consultation with relevant international and regional financial institutions and other relevant stakeholders. The process will assess financing needs, consider the effectiveness, consistency and synergies of existing instruments and frameworks, and evaluate additional initiatives, with a view to prepare a report proposing options on an effective Sustainable

contribution by the EMG on the UN system-wide perspectives on the environmental dimension of the post 2015 development agenda.