



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



<p>21st Senior Officials' Meeting of the Environment Management Group Technical Segment</p> <p>Technical Segment, 21 September 2015 (9a.m.-12p.m. NY time) at the UN HQ GA Building Conference room 8 (CR8) 1st basement</p> <p>Senior Segment, 24 September 2015, (8.30 a.m-11 a.m.) at the UN HQ, Secretariat Building Conference Room A (CR-A) 1st Basement</p>	<p>MG/SOM.21/04/Rev.1</p> <p>18 September 2015</p> <p>Distribution: EMG members</p>
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Strategic Directions for the EMG and its future work

Note by the Chair

Introduction

The Senior Officials, under agenda item 3, are invited to engage in a strategic and forward looking discussion to provide their perspectives on enhancing the coordination, coherence and overall effectiveness of UN system-wide work on the environment. This discussion will take place in the context of the historic launch of the 2030 sustainable development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the increased expectations of the UN system, as expressed in the outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference, the first meeting of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA), and the outcome document of the September 2015 Sustainable Development Summit.

The increased focus on environmental issues in the UN system has been significant, reflecting both the rising importance assigned to these issues by Member States and the public at large, as well as the growing competence and capacity of the system in environmental matters. Many agencies now have strategic approaches on the environment as part of their overall strategic and programmatic frameworks. However, ensuring the fully effective implementation of these strategies in a collaborative manner and their alignment with the SDGs requires greater coherence and better coordination among the various UN entities involved.

The meeting of the Senior Officials marks as well the 15th anniversary of the EMG, which was established by the UN General Assembly with the stated purpose of enhancing United Nations system-wide interagency coordination related to specific issues in the field of environment and human settlements. This year's deliberations of the Senior Officials will therefore be a timely opportunity to consider the adequacy of the EMG's Terms of Reference

and its place within the overall post 2015 governance structure and its future focus and modalities of work, so as to ensure it fits the purpose of contributing effectively to the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda and the achievement of the SDGs.

In their deliberations, the Senior Officials may consider the progress reports by the EMG's Issue Management Groups and Consultative Processes, most notably, the progress of the Consultative Process on the System Wide Framework of Strategies on the Environment, and the report of the EMG Task Team on "Maximizing the Effectiveness of the EMG in the Context of the Post-2015 Development Agenda".

Thematic panel discussions

In light of the above, it is proposed that the Senior Officials organize their discussion and provide their strategic vision in an open and interactive manner on the following two interlinked themes and through two panel discussions including:

Panel I Challenges and opportunities of the UN system in responding to the SDGs and supporting their effective implementation in particular the environmental sustainability dimension

Moderator

Christian Friis Bach, Executive Secretary of the UNECE

Panelists

Achim Steiner , Executive Director of UNEP
Gina Casar, Associate Administrator of UNDP
Joan Clos, Executive Director of the UN-Habitat
Sally Fegan-Wyles , Acting Head of UNITAR
Rolph Payet, Executive Secretary of the BRS

Suggested questions for discussion:

- 1) What are the main challenges for the UN system as a whole in integrating and implementing the SDGs, in particular the environmental sustainability dimension ?
The issues that can be discussed include : availability of data, resources, adequacy of governance, reporting and monitoring and ensuring coherence.
- 2) How do we contribute to deepening and enhancing the effectiveness of the integrated approach to policy formulation and implementation, especially in the area of the environment? In particular how do UN agencies, each operating within their respective mandates, best support integrated policy formulation and implementation in the "nexus" issues?
 - How can the EMG most effectively handle the nexus issues that cut across institutional boundaries (such as environment and health; environment and land management; environment and energy, etc.) ?

- 3) Would the response of the UN system to the environmental dimension of the sustainable development agenda benefit from enhanced coordination among the agencies active in these areas, and if so, what form should such enhanced coordination take?
- How do we identify environmental issues in the context of the SDGs that need coordination and for which the EMG could make an effective contribution?
 - Agencies have varying comparative advantages and resource endowments--these may appear different when considered from an agency-specific standpoint than when examined in a system-wide perspective. Should EMG have a role in identifying these comparative advantages, as part of its efforts to facilitate greater coordination?
- 4) With the MEAs and national environmental legislation, there already exist wide-ranging environmental commitments on the global and national level. How can the UN system strengthen the observance of these critical elements of the environmental rule of law and link them most effectively to the 2030 sustainable development agenda? What can or should the UN system bring to institutional strengthening in-country, and to the data and monitoring effort, in support of these linkages?

Panel II Contribution of a System Wide Framework of Strategies on the Environment and ways of maximizing the EMG effectiveness in supporting the post 2015 development agenda and the SDGs

Moderator

Elliott Harris, Director of the EMG

Panelists

Flavia Schlegel, Assistant Director General of UNESCO

Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary of UNFCCC

Christian Blondin, Chief of Cabinet of WMO

Fang Liu , Secretary General of ICAO (tbc)

Shamshad Akhtar , Executive Secretary of UN-ESCAP

Mr. Gary Fowle, Head, Liaison Office to the United Nations, ITU

Suggested questions for discussion:

a) A System Wide Framework of Strategies on the Environment

- 1) What has been done or needs to be done in each agency to align their existing environmental-related programs or strategies with the SDGs?
 - Has this been done or undertaken as part of an overall alignment of the agency's strategy with the sustainable development agenda as a whole--is there a need for an alignment effort specifically related to the environmental component of the SDGs?
 - Will the ongoing alignment of individual agency strategies and work programs lead to some degree of convergence among these strategies? Could such convergence eventually facilitate the formulation of a overall strategy shared by most agencies, within which the individual environmentally-relevant programs and activities of each agency could be accommodated?
 - What role could/should the EMG play in this process of "internal" alignment? Would there be value in the EMG collecting and disseminating within its membership information on how individual agencies are aligning the environmental components of their strategies and work programs, with a view sharing experience, approaches and possibly good practice? If so, how could such a function be organized within the existing EMG framework?
- 2) How would the agencies make sure that their SDGs strategies are informed by the already established goals and targets under the MEAs?
- 3) Sharing information on the environmental programs and strategies of agencies and, in particular, on how agencies are adapting these to render them consistent with the SDGs, could help to identify areas where the collaboration, coordination and joint work among agencies can be deepened or initiated. What role could EMG play in this effort?
 - How should this "external alignment" effort be organized within EMG, without unduly increasing reporting requirements of the agencies?
 - From this perspective, how can this EMG coordination effort be aligned with other coordination efforts and platforms within the UN system -- thematic platforms, such as UN-WATER, or institutional platforms such as UNDG?
- 4) What can be the value and function of a System Wide Framework of Strategies on the Environment in supporting : the internal alignment of agencies' strategies and work programs with the SDGs; in facilitating the identification of the potential areas of collaboration and other synergies; and in promoting convergence among agencies around the priorities of environmental sustainability set out in the SDG agenda?
 - What are the challenges and implications of committing to such Framework - from the perspective of an institution and its governing body? What would be the appropriate

mechanisms or modalities for implementation of such a Framework, and what role the EMG can play, in implementation or monitoring ?

b) Role and contribution of the EMG in the follow up of the post-2015 development agenda and ways of maximizing its effectiveness

- 1) How can the EMG most effectively serves its members, and contribute to the work of their respective governing bodies, particularly to UNEA?
- 2) In what areas should the EMG have an institutional role in the collective efforts to support implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, and how can that role best be defined and realized?
- 3) EMG's primary function is to foster and support coordination on environmental matters within the UN system, but there exist many other mechanisms and platforms of coordination of relevance to the environmental agenda, both institutional (e.g. CEB and its Committees), and thematic (UN-WATER, UN-ENERGY, UN-OCEANS). How should the EMG position itself relative to these other mechanisms and platforms?
 - Should EMG engage in issues (such as water) for which a functioning thematic coordination mechanism already exists?
 - Should EMG's work on environmental matters feed into the deliberations of the HLCP, UNDG and CEB, and if so through what channels? Should this only pertain to issues where a system-wide decision is necessary?
 - How can EMG distinguish emerging environmental issues of strategic importance requiring a system-wide response that it will handle itself, from those requiring the attention of the broader coordination bodies?
- 4) Do the current governance structure and operating modalities of the EMG suffice as it commits to support the 2030 sustainable development agenda?
 - How do EMG member agencies view the position and role of the United Nations Environmental Assembly (UNEA) in terms of guiding the work of the EMG, and as the principal addressee of much of its normative work? How should the decisions and resolutions of UNEA, as the highest environmental authority of the UN, be brought to the attention of the EMG member agencies' governing bodies and feed into their respective environmental work?
 - With the "environment" interwoven across the whole SDGs agenda, many of the environmental issues that the UN will have to deal with are "nexus" issues. What role should the EMG play in these issues, and how should it interface with the

entities dealing with the “non-environmental” sides of the nexus issues (e.g. in the more specifically *health-related* parts of the health and environment nexus)?