



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



22nd Senior Officials' Meeting of the Environment Management Group

EMG/SOM22/4

Technical Segment, 21 September 2016 (8a.m.-13.00. NY time) at the UN HQ GA Building Conference room 8 (CR8) 1st basement.

05 September 2016

Distribution: EMG members

Senior Segment, 22 September 2016, (9.00 a.m.-12.30pm. NY time) at the UN HQ GA Building Conference room 8 (CR8) 1st basement.

Strategic Directions for the EMG and its Future Work

Note by the Chair

Introduction

Under agenda item 4, the Senior Officials are invited to engage in a strategic and forward-looking discussion on how to enhance coordination, coherence and overall effectiveness of the UN system's work on the environment, especially with regard to delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They are also invited to share their thoughts on emerging environmental issues which warrant inter-agency collaboration and a system-wide approach.

In this context, the Senior Officials may wish to consider specifically, Resolution 2/5 of the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), in which Member States expressed their expectations of enhanced coordinated, coherent and integrated delivery from the UN system on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda, including by: 1) implementing the System-wide Framework of Strategies on the Environment (SWFS); 2) fostering partnerships for achieving environmental goals; 3) engaging with regional coordination mechanisms; and 4) promoting the integration of the environmental dimension into UN development assistance frameworks at the country level. They may also wish to consider the common principles recently adopted by the UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) to guide the UN system in its support for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, highlighting the need to enhance partnerships for implementation, improve coherence and generate synergies in view of the integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda.

In light of the above, it is suggested that the Senior Officials focus their strategic debate on:

- a) The challenges and opportunities in supporting Member States in implementing the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda;
- b) The implementation of the SWFS as an enabling tool in this context and possible UN system-wide partnerships for effective and efficient delivery of emerging environmental issues that warrant inter-agency collaboration;
- c) Enhancing the UN system's environmental and social sustainability and its relevance to the UN system Fitness for Purpose Agenda; and
- d) Maximizing the effectiveness of the EMG to serve the 2030 Agenda most relevantly and effectively.

Environment Management Group Secretariat (EMG)

11-13 Chemin des Anémones, International Environment House, CH-1219 Châtelaine, Geneva, Switzerland

Tel: +41-22-917-8693 ♦ Fax: +41-22-917-8024 ♦ Email: emg@unep.ch

The outcome of this debate will serve as strategic guidance for the design and delivery of the EMG's future work including its work plan for 2017-2018 and the implementation of the SWFS.

Challenges and opportunities faced by the UN system in delivering on the environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda

As Member States embark on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the need for the UN system to provide coordinated and coherent support in an integrated fashion becomes ever more important. The interdependence and complementarity among the 17 SDGs and their targets and between the SDGs and existing environmental goals under the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), imply that none can be fully achieved without progress on the others. Hence, the UN system's ability to cut across domains and to pursue integrated objectives and outcomes will be a critical success factor not only to deliver the environmental dimension but also for the implementation of the entire 2030 Agenda. UN agencies must identify and build on areas of common concern, cooperate and share information on implementation, in order to minimize the duplication of effort and generate helpful synergies across different domains of policy. They must also establish and promote effective partnerships for implementation.

The Senior Officials are therefore invited to elaborate on delivering on the environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda considering for example the following questions:

- 1) What are the key challenges and opportunities faced by the UN agencies in integrating and implementing the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda ?
- 2) What types of actions, partnerships or mechanisms are needed to support the integrated approach for implementation of the environmental dimension and greater coherence in its delivery by the UN system?
- 3) How do UN agencies, each operating within their respective mandates, best support integrated policy formulation and the implementation of "nexus" issues such as Environment and Health, Environment and Energy and Environment and Land Management, etc.?

Implementation of the System-wide Framework of Strategies on the Environment (SWFS) and emerging environmental issues that warrant inter-agency collaboration and partnerships

Many UN agencies have aspects of the environmental agenda as part of their overall strategic and programmatic frameworks in support of the implementation of their respective mandates. However, ensuring a full implementation of these strategies would benefit from enhanced coordination, synergies, partnerships and greater coherence among the various entities involved. The preparation and endorsement of the SWFS was a significant step undertaken by the UN system to achieve greater synergy, collaboration and coherence in its work on the environment to support Member States in the delivery of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda.

As an immediate action under the SWFS, the EMG should prepare a UN-wide report on the UN system's contribution to the environmental dimension of the SDGs. The report will, *inter alia*, identify aspects of the environmental agenda that require further collaboration and partnerships by UN entities, and opportunities for directing greater attention and common resources to closing the existing gaps. It will also identify measures to reduce the fragmentation of efforts within the UN system, and thereby strengthen the UN's overall effectiveness in supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Going in that direction, the EMG would benefit from strategic guidance by the Senior Officials, for example, through the following questions:

- 1) What are the main challenges of the UN agencies in contributing to the implementation of the SWFS? What can they offer to ensure a sustained and continued process for implementation of the Framework?
- 2) How can the SWFS report impact the delivery and effectiveness of the of UN system’s work on the environment at country level ?
- 3) How could the maximum potential of the SWFS be ensured? What can we learn from other successful partnerships?

UN system environmental and social sustainability and its relevance to Fitness for Purpose for the 2030 Agenda

The adoption of the SDGs challenges the UN System to consider if its current internal sustainability efforts and the progress achieved over the past few years adequately support the integrated 2030 Agenda and responds to the expectations of Member States. The EMG work streams on enhancing Environmental and Social Sustainability in the UN (ESS) , UN Climate Neutrality (including the recent CEB roadmap for a climate-neutral UN by 2020) and the Peer Review Process, are examples of such system wide efforts.

Moving towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda with its universal and integrated agenda, and significant role of the UN system in leading by example, the UN entities may want to consider if the current approach, mechanisms and modalities of the internal UN sustainability efforts including those under the EMG are adequate in integrating the objectives of the 2030 Agenda at policy, program and facilities levels.

The Senior Officials are therefore invited to discuss opportunities/implications of the 2030 Agenda for the internal work and operations of the UN system in light of the existing UN internal sustainability processes, by considering the following questions:

- 1) What are the implications of the 2030 Agenda and specifically its environmental dimension, for the internal operations and management practices of the UN?
- 2) How can the existing processes, such as the UN Climate Neutral Strategy and the Sustainable UN initiative, be further enhanced and used to strengthen the UN position as a role model in internalizing the environmental dimension at the corporate level?
- 3) How can this process be integrated in the existing discussions on the operationalization of the CEB common principles for the implementation of the SDGs?
- 4) Can the EMG Peer Review Process be expanded from the consideration of internal management practices for facilities and operations to a wider review of agencies’ progress in internalisation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda and for sharing their best practices and improving effectiveness and resource efficiency?

Maximizing the effectiveness of the EMG in light of the 2030 Agenda

Following the Report prepared by the EMG on maximizing the effectiveness of the EMG in 2015 and its consideration by the second session of UNEA, Member States have requested the Executive Director of UNEP to follow up on the Report's recommendations and to inform the Assembly on the implementation of the Report at its third meeting to be held in November 2017.

Consequently the Task Team on Maximizing the Effectiveness of the EMG has been invited to consider an approach to follow up on the Report's recommendations and findings. In this context, the Senior Officials are invited to provide their views on the follow-up of the Report to guide the work of the Task Team by considering the following questions:

- 1) Does the EMG Terms of Reference require reconsideration in view of the 2030 Agenda? For example: is the EMG fit for the purpose of serving cross-cutting environmental issues of the post-2015 development agenda including the nexus issues?
- 2) What possible functions should/could the EMG shoulder? Is the current EMG approach and mandate sufficient to address those functions?
- 3) What systematic approach could the EMG take to ensure that it appropriately covers both strategic and operational emerging issues?
- 4) What would be the benefits of maintaining the current mandate and what could be possible downsides to changing the mandate?
- 5) How could synergies among the different EMG work streams be enhanced to ensure efficient use of resources, both within the Secretariat and in the member agencies?
- 6) What measures are needed to ensure that the EMG and its outputs have the greatest impact possible, including at country level?
- 7) How should the EMG monitor its effectiveness and results?