



United Nations Environment Management Group

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**Annual meeting of the Environment Management Group
Hosted by the World Health Organization at its Headquarters
Geneva, 8 October 2007
9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.**

System-wide coherence on International Environmental Governance

Progress report by the EMG Secretariat

I. Introduction

1. Wide-ranging views have been expressed on the need for more coherence in the development and delivery of environment-related activities at the international level. Given the fact that international organizations derive their mandates and work from requests and activities at the national and regional levels, the question of coherence naturally arises for Governments and international organizations alike.

2. The need to improve coherence has already resulted in both dialogue and concrete initiatives. These include relevant recommendations of the 2005 World Summit, the establishment by the UN Secretary-General of the High-Level Panel on UN System-Wide Coherence and the creation of an informal consultative process on the institutional framework for UN environmental activities, led by Ambassadors Maurer and Heller of Switzerland and Mexico. The work of the Ambassadors culminated in the ‘Co-Chairs’ Options Paper’, currently under informal consideration and review by the General Assembly (GA) and through bilateral consultations.

II. The EMG mandate and work on International Environmental Governance

3. At the first meeting of the High-Level Advisory Group on System-Wide Coherence, chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General (DSG) in New York on 25 May 2007, the UNEP Executive Director was requested by the DSG to facilitate a process to consider the environment-related recommendations of the aforementioned group. Ambassadors Maurer and Heller had already presented their Co-Chairs’ Options Paper to the General Assembly at the time of this meeting. The Co-Chairs’ paper, as well as the outcome of other consultations, provides useful information on where Governments’ interests lie, and several options regarding how to move forward. It was deemed important for UN agencies and MEA secretariats to consider these views in a coherent manner, and to report back to the DSG with a preliminary set of comments on the current debate as well as additional ideas.

4. The Executive Director of UNEP, in his capacity as the chair of EMG, tasked the EMG Secretariat with gathering the views of different organizations through a questionnaire about the Co-Chairs’ paper and the options presented. The questions, addressed to all EMG members, also raise the wider issue of a long-term vision for environmental governance.

III. The First Meeting of the Issue Management Group (IMG) on International Environmental Governance (IEG)



5. EMG members were invited both to reply to the questionnaire and to attend the First Meeting of the IEG, which was convened on 5 September 2007 in Geneva to review EMG submissions and to initiate discussions. Despite the short notice and the very tight deadline, a total of twenty-eight EMG members participated in the exercise, either by providing input or by attending the meeting (or both).¹ Responses were detailed and substantive. They provided valuable input for a summary paper prepared by the EMG Secretariat and circulated at the meeting for discussion.

6. At the meeting on 5 September, EMG members reviewed the summary paper prepared by the EMG Secretariat and elaborated further on key points and ideas to be forwarded to the DSG as part of the consultative exercise.

7. In general, the group felt that, while decisions on any changes to be made to the IEG framework are exclusively in the hands of Governments, the secretariats of UN agencies and MEAs have a responsibility to provide information and opinions to inform intergovernmental discussions and related decision-making. Such contributions from secretariats will help to ensure ownership and, eventually, their successful implementation of any reforms that may be agreed.

IV. Informal consultations on the institutional framework of UN environmental activities

8. The note prepared for the DSG was subsequently forwarded to her office and distributed, for information, to the informal session of the 61st General Assembly convened by the Co-Chairs on 10 September in New York to receive initial feedback from delegations on their Options Paper².

9. During the session, the EMG Secretariat reported to the GA that a transparent process is now in place within UN agencies to consider these issues collectively. The exercise had, to date, facilitated interactions and allowed the group to: exchange preliminary views on options under discussion; identify obstacles encountered or successes achieved by agencies in enhancing the coherence of the system; suggest areas that might need further exploration and discussion; flag options considered to have some merit for enhancing the coherence of the system; and identify the possible implications of the options and recommendations for the UN system.

10. The Co-Chairs welcomed the EMG paper and informed participants that discussions on the options would most probably continue during the 62nd session of the GA, once the new GA President is fully briefed and has decided how to proceed. Bilateral consultations would also continue. The next collective review of the paper is expected in mid-October.

V. Next steps

VI. Guidance of the EMG is sought to identify how best to continue to contribute to the ongoing debate and to initiate activities within the EMG group that will further enhance coherence of the IEG system. Key ideas for the DSG and for possible further consideration by the GA, as well as areas where action may be taken, are presented in document /MG/AM.07/03 for the consideration of the group.

¹ These include: ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, BASEL, CBD, CITES, CMS, FAO, IMO, UNCCD, UNCTAD, UNDESA, UNFCCC, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNDP, UN HABITAT, UNHCR, UNIDO, UN/ISDR, UNICEF, UNITAR, WHO, WTO, WMO, and the World Bank.

² "Informal consultation process of the plenary on the issue of the institutional framework for the environmental activities of the United Nations in follow-up to paragraph 169 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome", 61st session of the General Assembly, 10 September 2007, New York