



United Nations Environment Management Group

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United Nations Environment Management Group
Forum on the United Nations Reform Initiatives
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Report of the Environment Management Group Forum on United Nations Reform Initiatives

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Environment Management Group (EMG) Forum on United Nations Reform Initiatives took place at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland on 3-4 July 2006. The Forum of senior officials/EMG Focal Point on 3 July 2006 was jointly chaired by representatives of the United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and was held to facilitate discussions on the contribution of EMG to the current processes of United Nations reform, specifically those processes comprising the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Environment, and the United Nations General Assembly informal consultations on international environmental governance.

2. The EMG Forum consisted of a one day consultation of senior officials representing EMG members on Monday, 3 July, and a half-day meeting of executive heads of agencies and executive secretaries of multilateral environmental agreements on 4 July 2006. The consultation was co-chaired by Mr. Walter Erdelen, who facilitated the deliberations. He worked closely with the ad hoc group set up to facilitate the formulation of proposals for the consideration of the participants for strengthening the work of the EMG. At the Forum, representatives of EMG members exchanged views and perspectives on the issues at the centre of current consultations on United Nations reform initiatives, with the overall aim of ensuring that the contribution of EMG to the respective initiatives fully reflected the perspectives and views of its members and was endorsed by them.

3. The consultation of senior officials on 3 July allowed for a frank exchange of views on the implications of United Nations reforms initiatives for EMG and produced a consensus statement outlining an approach for strengthening the work of EMG. The meeting discussed the importance of continuing and enhancing collaboration and cooperation between EMG members on environment and sustainable development. The officials agreed (as proposed by the EMG Chair at the luncheon hosted by him on 3 July 2006) that EMG should be given two years to demonstrate its worth and added value. In summary, the officials also agreed that:

(a) There was a need to review the existing arrangement between EMG members in sectoral areas at the global and regional levels;

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(b) The EMG secretariat needed to take stock of current activities in the area of sustainable development cooperation and networking activities in order to identify the areas in which cooperation amongst EMG members could provide benefits; and

(c) The EMG secretariat should circulate the results of that stocktaking exercise for EMG members to review and submit their comments.

4. The present report provides an overview of the key issues raised during the meeting of heads of agencies and executive secretaries on 4 July 2006.

II. Opening remarks

5. Opening statements were made by Mr. Denis Aitken, Assistant Director-General and Mrs. Susanne Weber-Mosdorf, Assistant Director-General, Sustainable Development and Healthy Environments, World Health Organization (WHO); Mr. Marcel Boisard, Executive Director/UN Assistant Secretary-General, United Nations Institute For Training and Research (UNITAR); Mr. Walter Erdelen, Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and Co-Chair of the EMG Forum on United Nations Reform Initiatives; Mr. Kim Hak-Su, Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and Pacific (UNESCAP); Mr. Richard Kinley, Officer-in-Charge, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); Mr. Jerry Lengoasa, Assistant Secretary-General, World Meteorological Organization (WMO); Mr. Peter Maurer, Switzerland's permanent representative to the United Nations and Co-Chair of the United Nations General Assembly informal consultations on international environmental governance; Mr. Harsha Vardhana Singh, Deputy Director-General, World Trade Organization (WTO); Mr. Achim Steiner, Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and Chair of EMG; and Mr. Kandeh Yumkella, Director-General, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). Mr. Steiner, Chair of the Forum was assisted by co-chairs Mr. Erdelen, Mr. Aitken and Mr. Kinley.

6. Mr. Walter Erdelen introduced the outcome of the deliberations of the segment of senior officials representing the EMG members. Mr. Erdelen welcomed the widespread support for a forward looking review of the role of EMG and noted that such a process was an important element of the system-wide reform process. He said that there was a need for a clear understanding of the commitments and responsibilities of EMG and its member organizations, including the ways that EMG members could work together and the possible use of differentiated approaches to specific issues. In order to enhance collaboration, there was a need for concrete timelines on what EMG could achieve in the coming two years, such as reviewing existing cooperation arrangements to establish a thematic focus and embarking on a stocktaking exercise that reviewed existing cooperation in the field of sustainable development and other networking activities. There was a need to look at three levels of EMG work, namely the High-level Panel, field and country level planning, and emerging issues. In the latter area it would be possible to make a valuable input, especially if EMG concentrated on using concerted action to make a difference in a limited number of areas. There was also a need to put in place a 'meta-structure' in the form of a clearing house mechanism, which could bring together the work of EMG members in a coherent form; such a system could be a powerful source of information for all United Nations member States and EMG member organizations.

7. Mr. Steiner warmly welcomed EMG members and said that he had been briefed on the substance of the discussions between senior officials of EMG member organizations that had taken place on the previous day. He noted that it was his first meeting in his capacity as the UNEP Executive Director and Chair of EMG. At present, there was much lively debate on the issue of environmental governance and the contribution of the environment to sustainable development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Processes underway in the United Nations were bringing into focus and even calling into question the established ways of doing business, the efficacy of the existing institutional arrangements and policy processes, and the mechanisms that the United Nations and member States had established to address the ever growing challenge of how to ensure that the environmental dimension of sustainable development is adequately addressed. He explained that instead of delivering his prepared speech, which contained valuable information about EMG, he would circulate that text and instead make a few remarks about the issues that faced EMG at present.

8. Outlining some of the challenges facing EMG, he observed that coordinating the work of United Nations organizations was sometimes a difficult task, since no one wanted to be

coordinated. The mandate of EMG did not provide for one entity to assert itself over another and there was no intent that EMG should coordinate other bodies. The purpose of EMG was, rather, to facilitate collaboration. The mechanism was intended to be a resource for all members, rather than a hindrance. There were currently many coordinating bodies within the United Nations system that were not yielding added value in the perceptions of their members. EMG was trying to achieve something that had become increasingly elusive within the United Nations system, namely the capacity to work in close cooperation, using different approaches and specializations to achieve more collectively than would be possible individually. Members should therefore work in a synchronized manner, conscious that the current process of reform was highlighting what agencies were doing to address the fact that while the United Nations system was very good at creating and connecting individual elements, it was not very good at establishing strategic frameworks within which to leverage the collective resources of its members. The world spent an enormous amount of money addressing environmental sustainability through EMG members and their efforts would appear much more impressive if those institutions could explain the benefits and impacts of their work collectively.

9. He stated his deep commitment to investing the energy and resources of UNEP into hosting the EMG secretariat and proposed several means that would help EMG to realize its mandate. That mandate called for measures to address specific areas where coordination, cooperation and collaboration were needed. There was a particular need for EMG to address the specificities of the issues; in the past EMG had taken a broader approach to addressing problems, which had proven extremely difficult, particularly since the Group met only periodically.

10. He expressed concern that heads of agencies and organizations had previously been expected to develop means to ensure collaborative action in a vacuum. Instead, there was a need to undertake much more preparatory work prior to EMG meetings. Issue-oriented taskforces could play a vital role in ensuring adequate preparation of recommendations for the meetings of head of agencies. It would also be possible to take an issue-based approach to addressing the specifics of the EMG mandate by convening thematic groups and giving them time to work in the interval between formal EMG meetings. EMG member organizations could also designate specific staff to meet and develop substantive materials, so that when EMG conducted high level meetings, senior decision makers would be provided with top quality analysis, information and potential decisions.

11. In addressing specific issues, he said, EMG should recognize that not all issue-oriented taskforces required the participation of all EMG members and that EMG should approach the matter as a clustering issue, wherein lead functions were assigned to some agencies or organizations and supportive functions assigned to others. It was to be hoped that members could drive EMG towards such a working method and enable members to report back their success to the Secretary-General in two years time. That would require clear targets, tasks, timelines, and commitments by EMG members to work together. UNEP could very comfortably host the EMG secretariat and invest resources within such a framework, particularly if member organizations were willing to designate competent, capable and interested staff to contribute to the issue-oriented taskforces.

12. On the difficult question of how EMG should interact with the High-level Panel and General Assembly informal consultations, he noted that the senior officials present were reluctant to make an EMG input into those processes. While acknowledging that such reluctance might be due to the lack of time for a substantive discussion between member organizations aimed at defining an EMG perspective, he said it was regretful. While it would be important to listen to what member organizations might want to do or say, EMG should avoid implying that it had nothing to say or contribute to the reform processes. The United Nations system had been asked to respond to the reform processes and EMG should note that while the body had not had the opportunity to discuss reform options in sufficient depth to make a substantive and collective input it should present a series of responses outlining the experience and views on system-wide coherence and collaboration. The EMG secretariat should compile a document that presented what the various EMG members have already contributed to the reform processes and share that among EMG membership. That would highlight the simple but valuable role that EMG could play. The secretariat would be happy to facilitate such a collation of views and submit it to the relevant reform processes.

13. In concluding he expressed openness to the different ways that EMG could address key issues, including the modus operandi that should guide EMG work and discussions about what EMG could and could not contribute to United Nations reform processes.

14. Mr. Aitken said there was a need to address the problems that arose when secretariats of international agreements wanted to coordinate their activities and member States were reluctant to provide political support to such coordination. He said that one example was the way that energy-related issues were coordinated across the United Nations system. On the question of collaboration with respect to the environment, he said that not all United Nations member States were ready to move forward with coordination and reiterated that coordination would work better when member States were willing to let it occur.

15. Mr. Kinley said that EMG could contribute to ensuring that agencies worked together in a more proactive way. Noting that member States often gave mixed signals, he said it would be useful to learn from the Co-Chair of the General Assembly informal consultations on international environmental governance what signals member States were giving, since that could help EMG identify a set of issues where enhanced collective work would be of interest. There was also a need to identify a limited set of issues and move forward. From that success, it would be possible to demonstrate that a mechanism had been found to make EMG work better

16. Mr. Lengoasa identified the need to focus on two key issues at the core of the discussions on United Nations reform, namely the current challenges that should be met head on, and the new and emerging issues that were not yet integrated into policy platforms. He identified the need to focus on a few specific areas where EMG could bring together the collective efforts of the United Nations system. EMG and other collaborative forums needed to embrace the concept of value added, address very specific issues and ensure competency across the system. EMG should embrace a cluster of issues where it might be asked to take on leadership issues, for instance the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. EMG could make an important contribution through its ability to identify the existing priorities and identify new issues proactively. There was also a need to address the resistance of some bodies when agencies began to tackle new work areas that might be perceived to lie outside of their mandates, such as responding to tsunamis and earthquakes.

17. Mr. Singh welcomed Mr. Steiner to his new EMG and UNEP responsibilities and reiterated WTO's strong desire to cooperate with all UN agencies and MEA secretariats dealing with environmental issues. He recalled in this regard recent personal message from the WTO Director-General to the Commission on Sustainable Development and Meeting of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, as well as WTO's continuing involvement in other international environment-related processes. Mr. Singh said that WTO's attendance at EMG meetings was useful as a means of staying informed of current preoccupations within the United Nations. On the specific topic before the Forum, Mr. Singh explained that since WTO was not part of the UN system (but rather was a treaty-based institution that operated within the confines of that legal treaty), it would not be appropriate for WTO to pronounce on the main focus of this initiative. He underscored, however, that there existed considerable cooperation between WTO and other environment-related institutions and that even where there were constraints, these institutions had been involved by WTO in their discussions. Mr. Singh encouraged greater involvement of intergovernmental environmental institutions in the WTO's trade and environment discussions and expressed a hope that one of the outcomes from the present reform effort will be greater engagement in this regard.

18. Mr. Yumkella said that EMG was a useful mechanism for information and knowledge sharing and urged members to strengthen that function. He said that there was a need for EMG to address coherence at the country level; in particular, EMG should explore means to build capacity in the key national ministries involved in global environmental issues, including strengthening the role of parliamentarians. At the country level, EMG could explore ways to facilitate interaction between different United Nations focal points and relevant ministries, including considering how better to leverage the cooperative arrangements that already existed.

19. Mr. Kim provided an overview of UNESCAP cooperation with United Nations member States through various forums, such as the African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN), the Environment Congress for Asia and the Pacific (ECO-Asia), and the Arab Forum for Environment and Development (AFED). UNESCAP was working with other United Nations bodies, such as the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and other multilateral environmental agreements, as well as the UNEP regional office. He closed by stressing that UNESCAP was committed to working closely with EMG and its member organizations.

20. Mr. Maurer briefed the meeting on the current state of discussions and key issues raised by member States during the informal consultations on international environmental governance.

He said that the United Nations reform process has been overloaded with issues, which had meant less space for the issue of environment. There seemed to be broad agreement that there was a problem to be addressed and member States had recognized that the environment was degrading and that there was a growing discrepancy between the efforts being made in that area and the environmental problems faced. There was a clear recognition that despite some positive impacts, fragmentation had drawbacks and there were therefore strong efforts underway in support of a more coordinated approach. The political will existed to ensure that member States worked in a more coordinated manner and that the United Nations system contributed to achieving that goal as well. There was an increasing recognition of the need to address problems related to the burden faced by organizations, resource utilization, and efficiency.

21. There was, he said, a consensus on the need to strengthen the environment pillar of the United Nations and, in that context, to enhance the role of UNEP in the implementation of initiatives such as the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building. Opinion was divided, however, about how best to improve the United Nations institutional framework for environment; current discussions were focussing on developing stronger networks or umbrella institutions, improved sequencing and coordinated implementation or even stopping the process entirely. United Nations member States were increasingly aware of the need for better coordination and a more coherent system but that needed to produce tangible results. There was, however, a general feeling of unease about EMG, including concern that it was not performing optimally, and United Nations member States expected that EMG should demonstrate what it could contribute to system-wide coherence and enhanced cooperation. Some delegations had proposed that consideration should be given to the links between EMG and the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and more generally the development of stronger links between environment and development policy, in order that EMG should generate more coherent policy advice. In concluding, he said delegations valued the consultation process, although there was a need to clarify the format in which the work should continue.

III. Remarks from resource persons

22. Resource persons, Ms. Maria Ivanova, Assistant Professor of Government and Environmental Policy, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg and Mr. Adil Najam, Associate Professor of International Negotiation and Diplomacy, Tufts University, briefed participants on proposals and ideas for strengthening the United Nations system-wide approach to environmental coherence.

23. Mr. Najam argued that the notion that reforms represented a response to failure should be challenged. Reform was needed not because a system had failed but because it had outgrown its design. The success of a system should be celebrated and not all fragmentation and duplication should be condemned. Coherence should ensure that the sum of parts was not less than the whole. At present, however, the United Nations system spent a lot of time trying to convince others that the system achieved less than was the case. The aim of coherence was to achieve better implementation and concrete changes on the ground; different types of coherence were possible at different levels but coherence on the ground was of the greatest importance. The purpose of EMG was to be a catalyst for coherence where it was needed. EMG also needed to consider not just coherence within the environmental field but also coherence between environment and development, which in turn raised the issue of coherence between EMG and UNDG.

24. Ms. Ivanova underscored the need to understand the multiplicity of system-wide coherence, including consideration of who was doing what, how to achieve goals, how much finance was required and expected outcomes. She said that understanding that multiplicity was connected to the calls for a comprehensive assessment of the environment. EMG should have a normative role and become a catalyst for shared environmental norms and values. There were three ways to increase cooperation between EMG members, namely financial incentives, incentives linked to reputation, and sustained interaction. There was also a need for greater political visibility for the environment and the establishment of a position of United Nations Secretary-General for the environment, in line with the approach already adopted in the fields of economic and social affairs, and the humanitarian agenda.

IV. General discussion and inputs

25. During the general discussion, representatives of the following agencies and multilateral environmental agreement secretariats addressed the meeting: Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal (Basel Convention); Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); International Labour Organization (ILO); International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR); Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention); United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE); United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat); United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR); Universal Postal Union; World Bank; and WHO.

26. The representative of UNITAR said that his organization's programmes support effective national implementation of a diverse range of environmental agreements (including those related to climate change, chemicals and waste management, and biodiversity, among others). These activities are linked to national development planning whenever possible and the EMG could, he said, serve as a forum for sharing such experiences.

27. The representative of UNCTAD underscored her organization's commitment to promoting synergies and linkages and sharing information, adding that UNCTAD supported the coherency of environment with trade and development enterprises. There was a need to increase effectiveness and synergies across the system and the starting point should address the multiple and concentric levels of coherence. It would be important to consider how each organization would interface with others, the character of the investments being made, the competences of the organizations concerned and the value added by coordinating activities. It might be useful to consider those themes during the proposed stocktaking exercise.

28. The representative of UNECE underscored the need to focus on a policy vision and policy perspective, with EMG providing the intellectual leadership on environment within the United Nations system. Reviews could be very important ways of moving forward and making EMG more responsive and he endorsed the stocktaking exercise, subject to three provisos:

(a) The review should not be regarded as a goal but a tool, which should be used to provide intellectual leadership to global governance and environmental policy making. The review should produce a one page summary identifying the three to five most pressing issues, which should drive the agenda, both at the agency level and also at the public opinion level;

(b) The stocktaking should not be seen as a one-off process but rather as a regular systematic tool for monitoring. The review should provide a single but comprehensive framework for EMG members' work by addressing gaps and duplication and should be reported to members' governing bodies. The stocktaking should be policy driven and not bureaucratic; it should not comprise a list of projects. It might be possible to set up an informal task force to develop the appropriate conceptual framework;

(c) The stocktaking needed to address the regional dimension, which was often forgotten, as well as transboundary issues.

29. The representative of WHO emphasized the importance of focusing on the need for sectoral coherence at the country and global level. She noted the impacts of climate change, loss of biodiversity and land degradation on health, as well as on the environment and on economic and human well-being. Noting the importance of integrated policy approaches, she stressed the need for directing more attention to the way that policy affects health, illness and disease, as well as tackling the environmental determinants of health. EMG had a vital role to play in ensuring coherence between development policy and environment planning at the global and country levels. The stocktaking exercise would be useful and should focus on current activities; what could be improved; how to make a difference; and identifying common outputs and common projects. She concluded by urging greater coherence in addressing the specific issues within the remit of EMG.

30. The representative of ISDR emphasized the need to decide the specific issues on which to focus, highlighting the need to target issues, such as energy, that did not already constitute the core mandate of a specific agency. There was a need to focus on service provision and results oriented approaches. The United Nations system needed guidance on many issues related to the environment, such as how to strengthen capacity-building at local levels. There was also a need to understand each agency's environmental work. From a management perspective, the

stocktaking process should engage partners, rather than being the work of an independent consultant. Better coordination was needed between UNDG, the interagency standing committee on disaster reduction and EMG. ISDR already had an interagency task force on disaster risk reduction and a working group on environment and disaster risk reduction, which could form the basis of an EMG issue-based working group.

31. The representative of UNDP said that the purpose of the proposed stocktaking exercise should be to focus on the positives, identifying what was working well and also assessing the gaps. She stressed the need to learn from what was working.

32. The representative of FAO said there was a need to focus on thematic areas or a task driven approach to cooperation, noting that FAO had found that to be the most successful approach to cooperation. The proposed stocktaking work should incorporate a gap analysis but also identify areas that were excessively coordinated. The role of EMG was more normative in areas such as global and regional policy, knowledge networks, advocacy points and interface with UNDG, and there was a need for interaction between normative and operational activities. It would be necessary to tackle the shortage of funding for cooperative activities head on. Information sharing with respect to interfaces between sustainable resource management, sustainable livelihoods, ecosystems and territorial approaches would be welcome.

33. The representative of the World Bank supported the need to identify the types of issues that EMG should address.

34. The representative of the Ramsar Convention noted that the 2005 EMG review had made several important recommendations. She said that the main failure of EMG was that it had not acted on them and she called on EMG members to take responsibility for proposing means to strengthen EMG.

35. The representative of the Basel Convention underscored the need to explore the ways that EMG could improve the partnership among its members. Supporting the proposals for a stocktaking exercise and a focus on specific issues, she said that the stocktaking should be undertaken in a theme-based manner, rather than merely listing activities. It would be important that the exercise create a sense of ownership among EMG members and it was also necessary to follow up on the study and ensure that the results were clear. In the past, issue-based groups had produced little impact and it was important that such groups deliver clear outcomes. She concluded by emphasizing the need to be clear on the direction and ambitions of EMG.

36. The representative of UN-Habitat said that the process of finding an optimal solution for coordination and coherence has been on the United Nations agenda for many years. Supporting the proposals for a stocktaking exercise and the enhanced sharing of information, he proposed that UNEP ask an EMG member to provide backstopping support for the next EMG meeting, including the preparation of background information on specific issues to be addressed by EMG.

37. The representative of IFAD stressed the need for coherence at the country level, including necessary implementation support for maximizing the United Nations system's impact. The stocktaking exercise needed to address the role of agencies from a different perspective and map out the key entry points at the country level, bearing in mind that such entry points tended to be different for each agency. For example, IFAD entry points were through ministries of agriculture and, at the policy level, through poverty reduction strategies, rather than through environmental channels. Mapping out entry points would help focus efforts to mainstream environment into development decision-making.

38. The ILO representative expressed strong interest in actively contributing to EMG and cooperating with the executive directors of UNEP and other agencies at the country level. There was, he said, scope for members to achieve more both individually and through EMG. The focus of ILO was on practical programmes where it could collaborate positively. Examples included the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) and the actions to address the environmental consequences of ship-breaking. EMG could adopt a theme-based approach to such work, promoting decent work, taking into full account environmental considerations, and seeking coherence between the United Nations Global Compact, social, environmental and human rights standards, and multi-national corporations. The interaction of ILO and its constituents served as a valuable example for creating coherence with key groups, such as trade unions. EMG should accelerate practical action on the ground both within countries and globally.

39. The representative of the Universal Postal Union said that EMG played an important role in providing a more coherent view of events and actors in the environmental field. EMG should clarify its positions vis-à-vis other organizations.

V. Closing summary

40. Mr. Steiner provided a detailed overview of the morning's discussion. He said that the two-day discussions had very clearly called for the establishment of specific frameworks within which EMG could work, such as conceptual or stocktaking frameworks. A stocktaking exercise was needed to identify the core activities of EMG members, which should include a brief analytical summary, perhaps thematically based, of the key environment-related activities undertaken by each agency or organization and topics that linked with the environmental agenda.

41. Regarding the conceptual approach, he said EMG needed to ensure that its work added value to the work of each agency or organization. The key challenge for EMG was to create a conceptual framework for members to work in a more proactive manner together. EMG had repeatedly identified two key domains where it could add value, namely the global, system-wide level and the country level. EMG should look to ensure that its activities were relevant to both levels and added value to specific elements of each issue.

42. EMG could add value by focusing on the key current and emerging issues, he said, and the conceptual framework should generate a menu of options outlining the issues that could be addressed. Particular focus should be placed on those issues in which the greatest number of EMG members had a key interest and those which called for further attention, notably areas in which EMG could ensure swift successes.

43. EMG members needed to take the lead in coordinating and leading issue-oriented taskforces and discussions. It was not for UNEP alone to do the preparatory work for such activities; instead, consortiums of EMG members should take the lead. The ISDR representative's suggestion that the existing ISDR bodies addressing disaster risk reduction and the environment should become an issue-based group was worth consideration. Each issue-oriented taskforce should also have the freedom to include two or three think tanks or organizations outside of the United Nations system in order to leverage additional information and capacity.

44. Regarding the modus operandi of EMG, there was, he said, no opposition to establishing a few issue-oriented taskforces. In fact, the meeting reinforced the idea that it would be possible to ask one or more lead members of EMG to coordinate such issue-oriented taskforces, including agreeing on mandates and activities. The workings, including mandates, of the groups should be reviewed by heads of agencies and organizations, which would encourage the involvement of those heads and make it worthwhile to come to EMG meetings.

45. UNEP was prepared to look within its own funding for the core resources needed to enable the issue-oriented taskforces to operate but it was essential that EMG members also address the ways that their own agencies and organizations could support the groups, particularly through leveraging staff resources. UNEP could also look into its role in supporting meetings and the publications produced by the taskforces. The success of EMG work would depend on ensuring that EMG collectively supported the process and ensured returns on the investments made.

46. There was a need to agree on a set of criteria for assessing the performance of EMG. Members needed to come to an agreement on the impacts that were sought from EMG over the next 24 months or so. By establishing five or six key indicators, it would be possible to determine what was effective about the Group's work and allow EMG to prove that it was achieving results.

47. Mr. Steiner suggested that the proposals just outlined should be implemented during the coming three to four months. Specifically, he said that:

(a) Within three weeks, UNEP would summarize the stocktaking process in a way that allowed EMG members to consider the results within the context of their own agencies and

organizations and engage with other EMG members in constructing a framework document of 15-20 pages that would focus on future action;

(b) Within 3 months, EMG needed to:

(i) Reach general agreement on the overall direction; and

(ii) Identify two or three issue-oriented taskforces, including two or three lead agencies or institutions, as well as collaborative institutions;

(c) At the next EMG meeting in eight or nine months time, it would be necessary to deliver a specific workplan, including cutting edge analysis and recommendations, to the heads of agencies and organizations.

48. In closing, he said that the UNEP Governing Council was currently considering using the forthcoming session of the Governing Council/Global Environmental Ministerial Forum as a forum to discuss the issue of globalization and the environment and he requested EMG member organizations to submit contributions to the discussions, including assistance in the preparation of a discussion note for the next session of the Governing Council/Global Environmental Ministerial Forum.

49. Mr. Erdelen said that the present meeting was a turning point for EMG and that members were looking forward to a new direction for future EMG initiatives. He stressed that EMG was embarking on both a public relations and a streamlining exercise. Over the next few weeks, it would be necessary to identify concrete initiatives, addressing issues such as improved communications, which could be shared with EMG members.

50. Mr. Steiner adjourned the meeting at 12:50 p.m. on Tuesday, 4 July 2006.

Annex

Background material

A number of background documents were circulated prior to the EMG Forum on United Nations Reform Initiatives. Copies of those documents are available on the EMG website (<http://www.unemg.org>) and by request from the EMG secretariat (Hossein Fadaei, hossein.fadaei@unep.ch, or Julie Nevski, julie.nevski@unep.ch)

1. Letter of the Co-Chairs of the General Assembly informal consultations on international environmental governance, dated 24 May 2006, which raises specific questions, which participants in the EMG Forum may wish to address.
2. Issues note of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and the Environment, dated 5 May 2006 and entitled "Environment consultation", which poses a number of questions with respect to the institutional arrangements for the United Nations system's environmental activities and mainstreaming environment in development decision-making.
3. Letter of the President of the General Assembly, dated 26 January 2006, to which was attached a background note entitled "The institutional framework for the United Nations system's environmental activities".
4. Annotated agenda for the environmental consultation of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and the Environment, which took place in Nairobi on 5 May 2006.
5. United Nations Secretary-General's remarks at the first meeting of the High-level Panel on System-Wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and the Environment, held in New York on 5 April 2006.
6. UNEP contribution to the General Assembly informal consultations and Secretary-General's High-level Panel processes, entitled "United Nations reform: implications for the environment pillar". The paper was presented to the High-level Panel meeting in Nairobi on 4 May 2006.