



# 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



## 19<sup>th</sup> Senior Officials' Meeting of the Environment Management Group

19 September 2013<sup>1</sup>

Hosted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

LRC Room on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor of the UNDP FF-Building, 304 E 45<sup>th</sup> Street, New York.

Preparatory technical segment: 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Senior officials' segment: 3:00 – 6:00 p.m.

EMG/SOM.19/03/Rev.1

12 September 2013

Distribution: EMG members

## Progress report on EMG's ongoing work and suggested directions for further work

### Note by the Chair

### Executive summary

The present note is developed with the aim of supporting the relevant provisional agenda items of the 19<sup>th</sup> senior officials' meeting (SOM) of the Environment Management Group (EMG). It reports progress on ongoing work, including by the Issue Management Groups (IMGs), and proposes actions and directions for further work of the EMG in its contribution to the implementation of the outcome document of the Rio+20: "The Future We Want", the decision of the First Universal Session of UNEP Governing Council<sup>2</sup> as well as the decisions of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)<sup>3</sup> and the UN Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD)<sup>4</sup>. It suggests that the senior officials:

I) Continue the Issue Management Group (IMG) on Biodiversity to operationalize and transfer the UN Biodiversity Mapping Tool to the CBD<sup>5</sup>, contribute, as appropriate, to the review and implementation of the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), and the mid-term review process of the Biodiversity Aichi Targets and prepare a progress report for consideration of the 12<sup>th</sup> COP of the CBD;

II) Conclude the IMG on Land after submission of its report "The *UN Action Plan for Coordinated Action in the Drylands*"<sup>6</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD);

III) Continue the IMG on Green Economy to finalise the stocktaking report on UN green economy knowledge products and identify options on how the information gathered can be maintained; prepare a contribution on possibilities for preparing common policy; methodological or technical advice on inclusive green economy for use by each agency to

<sup>1</sup> Information on the meeting logistics, including the video-audio conference connections, is provided in the logistical note of the meeting (EMG/SOM.19/05)

<sup>2</sup> Decision 27/5

<sup>3</sup> Decision XI

<sup>4</sup> Decision: ICCD/CRIC(10)/L.8/Rev.1

<sup>5</sup> <http://ieg.informea.org/>

<sup>6</sup> The draft action plan is provided by UNCCD CRIC 12 in document ICCD/CRIC12/inf.2

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ensure a coherent approach in supporting Member States and commissioning an independent assessment of options for a UN system-wide coordination on inclusive green economy initiatives and activities.

IV) Continue the Consultative Process on Environmental and Social Sustainability in the UN system to follow up on system-wide issues related to the follow up of the UN Sustainability Framework. This includes the recommendations of the “Options Paper on the system-wide issues in the follow up of the Framework in the UN system” and finalise the Interim Sustainability Guide to help advance sustainability measures in each UN agency;

V) Consider the progress of the IMG on Environmental Sustainability Management and the Sustainable UN Facility (SUN) on their work in development and implementation of the Environmental Management Systems (EMS) in the UN system and providing technical support to EMG members following the decisions of the UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination and the High Level Committee on Management;<sup>7</sup>

VI) Consider the progress of the EMG Peer-Review process including the peer-reviews of WMO, UNIDO and UNEP and the findings so far and invite other EMG members to join the process and participate in the forthcoming meetings of the Peer Review Body in 2014 to finalize the Peer-Review reports for the next senior officials meeting;

VII) Consider establishing an Issue Management Group to prepare a UN system-wide approach to the sound management of chemicals in response to the decisions of various intergovernmental processes, including the Rio+20, the UN Environment Assembly of UNEP and the Conferences of the Parties (COP) to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, which have called for a synergized and coherent approach by the UN system in supporting the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM).

Suggest as well, a consideration by the EMG of the issue of taking stock of financing for the international cooperation on environmental matters “” in line with the Rio+20 outcome document which calls for “*greater coherence and coordination among the various funding mechanisms and initiatives related to sustainable development*”; and as a possible contribution to the UN Task Team Working Group on Financing for sustainable development.

VIII) Approve the work plan of EMG for the period 2014–2015, based on the understanding that the EMG secretariat will revise the plan presented in document EMG/SOM.19/04 to ensure that it fully reflects the actions agreed by the 19<sup>th</sup> senior officials meeting of the EMG. The work plan will be implemented on the basis of in-kind contributions from members and is subject to availability of resources;

IX) Welcome the opportunity to inform the Environment Assembly of UNEP and the Assembly to the UN General Assembly about its work. Senior officials also appreciate the guidance received from the First Universal Session of the UNEP Governing Council and request the Chair to continue the practice of circulating a draft of the report by EMG on its work to the Environment Assembly of UNEP at its next Session and to members of the Group for their comments;

X) Request the EMG secretariat to circulate to members of the EMG the date and venue for the 20<sup>th</sup> meeting of senior officials, and to consult with members on its agenda.

All EMG documents referred to in this report including those in the footnotes can be found on the EMG website: [www.unemg.org](http://www.unemg.org) under the special page for the 19<sup>th</sup> meeting of the EMG senior officials.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.unsceb.org/content/report-25th-session-march-2013-rome>  
<http://www.unsceb.org/content/first-regular-session-report-april-2013-madrid>

## Introduction

1. The present note reports on the progress on the ongoing work of the Environment Management Group (EMG), including by its respective Issue Management Groups (IMGs), as well as suggested actions for further work. The note is developed to support the provisional agenda items of the 19<sup>th</sup> senior officials' meeting.

### 1. The IMG on Biodiversity

2. Following the EMG Report “*Advancing the Biodiversity Agenda, A UN System-Wide Contribution*”, the Chair of the EMG provided a progress report on the contribution of the EMG to the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity (2011-2020)<sup>8</sup> to the CBD COP 11 in Hyderabad, India (8-19 October 2012).

3. COP11 in its decision XI on “cooperation with other conventions, international organizations, and initiatives” highlighted the contribution of the EMG Issue Management Group on Biodiversity, welcomed its progress report and invited it to continue facilitating cooperation among its members in support of the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and to provide a progress report for consideration by the COP at its 12<sup>th</sup> meeting.

4. The 7<sup>th</sup> IMG Meeting co-chaired by the CBD and the World Bank was convened on 15 October 2012 in Hyderabad, India, in the margins of the COP11. The IMG agreed to identify a consolidated knowledge management tool (web-tool) to bring together any guidance notes, data, tools and indicators in the UN system that could support countries in the implementation of the Aichi Targets. The IMG members expressed interest to contribute to the NBSAPs Forum in the revision and implementation of the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans. They also agreed to inform, through their focal points, the discussions on Sustainable Development Goals and the Post 2015 Development agenda on the importance of integration of the Aichi Targets in the SDG<sup>9</sup>.

5. The senior officials in their 18<sup>th</sup> meeting in November 2012 welcomed the decision and the positive response of the CBD COP11 on the EMG progress report. They decided to continue the IMG for another year to finalize the synthesis mapping report of EMG contribution to the Aichi Targets, develop a common approach to support the review and implementation of the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and prepare a progress report for consideration by COP12.

6. The UNEP Governing Council also at its first universal session in February 2013<sup>10</sup> reiterated the CBD COP11 decision and invited the EMG to continue facilitating cooperation among its members in support of the Strategic Plan.

7. The IMG held its 8<sup>th</sup> meeting on 30 May 2013, in the margins of the Biodiversity Conference in Trondheim Norway, co-chaired by the CBD and UNESCO. It exchanged views on the relevance of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity to the ongoing SDGs and the post 2015 processes. In that regard, the IMG welcomed the paper prepared by the CBD titled “The relevance of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and the Aichi Targets for the SDGs” as a good starting point that can be shared with the SDGs process. They agreed to coordinate with their agency focal points to the Thematic Consultations of the UN Task Team on the Post 2015 Development Agenda to highlight the Strategic Plan and the Aichi Targets in their submissions.

8. The IMG also reviewed progress in each agency with relevance to the implementation of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and considered the online biodiversity mapping tool containing information on UN agencies' key functions, tools, indicators and decisions in

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<sup>8</sup> (UNEP/CBD/COP/11/INF/5) <http://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/cop/cop-11/information/cop-11-inf-05-en.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> The full report of the IMG meeting is available in the EMG website ([www.unemg.org](http://www.unemg.org))

<sup>10</sup> refer to footnote <sup>2</sup>

support of the Aichi Targets<sup>11</sup>. Following the suggestion of CBD Executive Secretary, the IMG members expressed interest to take leading or contributing roles vis-à-vis one or more Aichi Targets.

9. IMG members agreed as well to provide any indicators they have developed with relevance to the targets and identify areas where they can help in monitoring progress against selected Aichi Targets as well as providing data that would help countries in the use of the indicators. They agreed to review and provide updates on their contributions to the Aichi Targets through the online mapping tool supported by INFORMEA and present the online tool to the 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the CBD Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 17) in Montreal, Canada in October 2013.

10. The IMG suggests the following actions for its future work for consideration by the senior officials:

***Suggested Action I: Directions for the Issue Management Group (IMG) on Biodiversity***

The senior officials decide to continue the IMG for another year to undertake and coordinate the following tasks:

1. Present the online biodiversity mapping tool to CBD SBSTTA 17 and transfer it to the CBD for future maintenance and making it available to Member States and other stakeholders.
2. Contribute, as appropriate, to the NBSAPs Forum for the review and implementation of the National Biodiversity Strategies and Actions Plan (NBSAPs).
3. Contribute to the mid-term review process of the Aichi Targets including by providing indicators and data in particular those relevant to the national level implementation of the targets.
4. Prepare a progress report by the EMG on contribution of the UN system to the Strategic Framework for Biodiversity, for consideration of the 12<sup>th</sup> COP of the CBD.

## **2. The IMG on Land**

11. The EMG report on Global Drylands (GDR) provided a ‘One UN’ response in support of the Drylands Agenda as a contribution to the 10 year strategic plan of the UNCCD. It highlighted the importance of global drylands to key emerging issues on the international agenda, including climate change, food security and human settlements, together with options for follow-up action<sup>12</sup>. The report set out a common vision and agenda for UN-wide action on drylands management and its role in addressing climate change and food security, through a *positive* drylands development and investment approach.

12. UNCCD COP10 welcomed the EMG Report and took note of the proposed coordinated action of the UN system on drylands as contained in the EMG Report and called on the

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<sup>11</sup> The biodiversity mapping tool can be accessed at [www. http://ieg.informea.org/](http://ieg.informea.org/). 17 UN entities and MEAs have contributed to the mapping exercise.

<sup>12</sup> A feature was included on the current crisis in the Horn of Africa, highlighting UN efforts to build resilience, reduce vulnerability and enhance capacity for disaster management. This situation also emphasizes that a long-term, pro-investment approach offers the opportunity to support the population of the Horn of Africa to respond to drought: not only this time, but for the many droughts to come. <http://www.unemg.org/index.php/global-drylands-a-united-nations-system-wide-response>

UNCCD Executive Secretary, in collaboration with the EMG, to work on a concrete action plan for 2012–2018 for promoting and strengthening relationships with other international organizations, institutions and agencies<sup>13</sup>.

13. The 18<sup>th</sup> senior officials' meeting of the EMG extended the mandate of the IMG on Land to prepare an Action Plan on the implementation of the "Global Drylands Report" for consideration of the 11<sup>th</sup> COP of the UNCCD. The UNEP Governing Council at its first universal session in February 2013, in its decision 27/5, reiterated the decision of COP10 and encouraged the work of the EMG in preparing the action plan.

14. A concept note was prepared with the support of the UNCCD to provide preliminary ideas on the elements of the Drylands Action Plan including the foundations, objectives and a road map for implementation. The concept note was made available to the 11<sup>th</sup> session of the Committee for the Review and Implementation of the UNCCD (CRIC11)<sup>14</sup>.

15. The concept note presented notions and outlined initiatives to develop a concrete action plan containing the following steps:

- (a) **challenges and opportunities for enhancing coordinated efforts** to further the development of drylands through Sustainable Land Management (SLM) and ecosystem rehabilitation (Section II),
- (b) **a coordinated action matrix to attain land-degradation neutrality**, that links international, national and local elements around Specific Target Areas in drylands (STADs) (Section III),
- (c) **a process to identify and select successful SLM and rehabilitation initiatives** and possible exportable templates for mainstreaming and global scale-up (Section IV),
- (d) **identification of a number of Specific Target Areas in Drylands (STADs), to implement** measurable and concrete SLM and land rehabilitation projects in drylands by 2018,
- (e) **a road map for implementation of the Action Plan.**

16. The IMG held its 4<sup>th</sup> meeting on 17 April 2013 in Bonn, Germany in the margins of the CRIC11 to present the outline of the action plan based on the concept note<sup>15</sup>. A draft "Action Plan for coordinated action in the Drylands" was prepared for consideration by the CRIC 12 and UNCCD COP11 in Windhoek, Namibia, 16-27 September 2012<sup>16</sup>.

17. The Action Plan focuses on implementation of the recommendations of the GDR through the identification of Specific Target Areas in Drylands (STADs) within the National Action Plans (NAPs) where effective collaboration between local, national and international mechanisms can attain measurable, time-framed and comparable concrete results in the reduction of degraded lands.

18. The Action Plan suggests a start-up or beta phase to test the framework through a limited sample of STADs per geographical region, in order to enable adjustment of the different components, fine tune selection criteria and determine effectiveness of implementation.

19. Main activities identified in the Action Plan include; a start-up or beta phase of the Action Plan to test the framework through a limited sample of STADs per geographical region, identify successful SLM and rehabilitation initiatives and examine the exportability of their approaches to other similar areas by:

- Identification of relevant stakeholders in STADs

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<sup>13</sup> Refer to document in footnote <sup>4</sup>

<sup>14</sup> The concept note was provided to CRIC in document ICCD/CRIC(11)/INF.5  
<http://www.unccd.int/Lists/OfficialDocuments/cric11/inf5eng.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> The full concept note of the 3<sup>rd</sup> IMG meeting is available on the EMG website: <http://www.unemg.org/index.php/issue-management-group-on-drylands-meetings>

<sup>16</sup> The draft action plan is provided to CRIC 12 in document ICCD/CRIC12/inf.2

- Establishing a sample of geographically representative Specific Target Areas in Drylands (STADs) within aligned National Action Plans
- Selecting an initial set of STADs for the start-up phase of the Action Plan
- Establishing time framed specific targets quantifying the reversal of land degradation.

20. The IMG suggests the following action for consideration of the senior officials:

***Suggested Action II: the Issue Management Group (IMG) on Land***

In view of the time-bound and issue-focused nature of the IMG and accomplishment of its tasks, the senior officials decided to conclude the work of the IMG on land by submitting the UN Action Plan on drylands to the 11<sup>th</sup> COP of the UNCCD.

### 3. The IMG on Green Economy

21. The EMG report “*Working together towards a balanced and inclusive Green Economy: a UN system-wide perspective*” published in December 2011, was the UN system’s major contribution to the Rio+20 Conference. Worked on by 40 UN entities, the report facilitated a common understanding of the inclusive green economy approach and the key measures required for a transition to such an economy. It also assessed how the UN system could provide coherent technical advice and capacity development services to countries interested in embarking on inclusive green economy pathways.

22. After the release of the EMG report, the senior officials at the 18<sup>th</sup> EMG meeting in September 2012 considered it important for the UN system to support and coordinate the implementation of the Rio+20 outcome document concerning green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, in particular in response to para. 66 of the outcome document.

23. The Senior Officials decided, therefore, to extend the IMG’s team for another year with two tasks:

- 1) Take stock of the existing UN system-wide web-based platforms and green economy resources, including toolkits, best practices, lessons learned and analytical/assessment methodologies, including for evaluation, and provide suggestions on how these resources can be catalogued and made publicly available through an appropriate platform to better serve the member states.
- 2) Present options to the EMG at its next session on where the coordination of work relating to the inclusive green economy should be placed within the UN system.

24. In light of the related mandates from Rio+20, an IMG co-chairing arrangement was proposed. This was to ensure that the IMG’s work is led in a way that reflects the multiple dimensions of the inclusive green economy concept.

25. In implementing the first task, the IMG met a few times via video-teleconference to agree on the stocktaking’s scope and modalities and review the information received from IMG members. A concept note was prepared, which defined the stocktaking’s objectives, scope, and outputs<sup>17</sup>. IMG members subsequently provided inputs through their responses to a questionnaire. An outline of the stocktaking report was also shared with IMG members for their comments.

<sup>17</sup> The concept note is available in the EMG website on green economy page ([www.unemg.org](http://www.unemg.org))

26. Through these interactions among IMG members, it was agreed that the stocktaking would focus on:

- 1) Providing an overview of the existing knowledge products;
- 2) Cataloguing their contents to guide stakeholders on how and when to use the resources; and
- 3) Making this knowledge accessible.

27. The preliminary stocktaking report builds on existing compilations, mappings, and platforms (such as UNDESA's survey on UN GE initiatives; the Inclusive Green Growth Toolkit developed by IOs at the request of the G20 and coordinated in the UN by UNDP; the Green Growth Knowledge Platform sponsored by GGGI, OECD, UNEP, and the World Bank; the Green Jobs Initiative by UNEP, ILO, IOE and ITUC, and the Partnership for Action on Green Economy by UNEP, ILO, UNIDO and UNITAR). It adds value by linking related platforms, scouting relevant new developments among IMG members, updating or completing the existing surveys/ mappings, cataloguing them, and introducing guidance on how to make the best use of these resources.

28. Due to the diverse range of the information received, it was agreed to sort the information as "core" and "relevant" knowledge products based on criteria such as inclusiveness and effect in changing or shifting investment towards clean technology, natural capital, human development, and institution building.

29. This non-prescriptive report provides guidance on the application of various toolkits, showing the steps to follow and tools to use in addressing a particular issue, at different levels and across sectors. The report also looks into the means of implementation as well as the methodologies for measuring an inclusive green economy. Some agencies have the private sector (including organizations of employees and workers) among their constituents. The stocktaking report allowed them to identify best practices/ research questions of particular relevance to this sector as well.

30. A potential second step could be a web-based tool to be hosted on an existing platform. This would avoid duplication, create synergies with the hosting initiative, and provide a one-stop window for accessing information on inclusive green economy. The web-based tool could include a resource library cataloguing the different knowledge products to make them more accessible to governments and development practitioners. The advantage of the web-based tool is to keep track of and update these fast evolving knowledge products as well as reach out to a large group of stakeholders.

31. In implementing the second task assigned by the senior officials, the IMG discussed the coordination on inclusive green economy within the UN system. It was felt that coordination is needed at global, regional, national, and institutional levels. Coordination may also be differentiated by country-level operations (where the coordination role of the UN Resident Coordinator is crucial); methodological guidance (an area where the Green Growth Knowledge Platform as well as the Partnership for Action on Green Economy attempt to coordinate) and global policy messaging (which has so far been coordinated through the IMG via the inter-agency report).

32. A fundamental aspect of the coordination on inclusive green economy is to ensure an environmentally, socially and economically balanced and integrated approach for the UN system as a whole in delivering services to member states. In this regard, there may also be a need to reflect on how the inclusive green economy approach can be mainstreamed in the UN system through the engagement of the CEB.

33. Comparing to the first task, the progress on implementing the second task has been slow. The majority of the IMG members have expressed no particular opinion on the admittedly sensitive issue of where to locate the coordination functions in the system. If this task is to be further pursued, an independent assessment of how the various UN inclusive green economy initiatives and programs should be coordinated, could ensure that the recommendations on coordination mechanisms are detached from any individual agency's self-interest.

34. The IMG suggests the following action on its future work for consideration by the senior officials:

***Suggested Action III: The Issue Management Group (IMG) on Green Economy***

The senior officials welcome the draft stocktaking report and guide on inclusive green economy knowledge products in the UN system and take note of the IMG's discussion on the coordination of inclusive green economy activities in the UN system.

They decide to extend the IMG for one year to:

1. finalise the stocktaking report and identify options on how the information gathered can be maintained including through web-based tools as a one-stop window for accessing these products by member states.
2. prepare a contribution on possibilities for preparing common policy, methodological or technical advice on inclusive green economy for use by each agency to ensure a coherent approach in supporting Member States.
3. commission an independent assessment of options for UN system-wide coordination on inclusive green economy initiatives and activities.

#### **4. Consultations on Environmental and Social Sustainability in the United Nations system**

35. Senior officials of the EMG at their 15<sup>th</sup> meeting in September 2009, launched the Consultative Process on Environmental and Social Sustainability in the United Nations system, to explore options for a possible system-wide approach to environmental and social sustainability to prevent and mitigate the unintended environmental and social impacts of UN operations and to look at associated opportunities in resource efficiency. Consequently, the report, "***A Framework for Advancing Environmental and Social Sustainability in the United Nations System***" was prepared and endorsed by the 17<sup>th</sup> EMG SOM in 2011, including the joint heads of agencies statement and the common approach (Sustainability Framework) described in the report. In 2012, the report with a foreword from the UN Secretary General was submitted to the Rio+20 process as well as to the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) through its High-Level Committees on Programmes and Management (HLCP and HLCM).

36. The Sustainability Framework aims to ensure a minimum level of real engagement by all while allowing each agency to implement sustainability in a manner appropriate to its circumstances. The Framework proposes: 1) a common vision, rationale and objective; 2) individual actions to be taken by each UN entity at policy, program and management levels to internalize environmental and social sustainability measures; and 3) collective actions for the system to undertake, such as a support and knowledge sharing function, minimum requirements, and a centralized reporting structure.

37. In April 2012, the HLCP took note of the report of the Environment Management Group on the *Framework for Advancing Environmental and Social Sustainability in the United Nations system* and invited the Chairs of the subsidiary bodies of the CEB (HLCM, HLCP, and UNDG) and the EMG Chair to consider how the report and its framework could be considered by the UN system. The HLCM took note of the report of the EMG with a view to reviewing it in connection with its financial and other implications related to management.



38. The Rio+20 outcome document stressed in several sections the importance of sustainability measures in the work and operation of the UN system, including in paragraphs 91-96. The Secretary General's report on mainstreaming of the three dimensions of sustainable development in the UN system refers to the Sustainability Framework as a good basis for developing a road map to integrate sustainable development in the UN system.

39. The EMG senior officials at their 18<sup>th</sup> meeting and as a contribution to the implementation of the outcome document, agreed to continue the Consultative Process for one more year in order to support the implementation of the Sustainability Framework by translating the policy-level Sustainability Framework into a roadmap or guide that clarifies the elements of the Sustainability Framework and provides guidance for its implementation. The senior officials also agreed to recommend to the first CEB meeting in 2014, or earlier, the transfer of the Sustainability Framework and its implementation to the CEB. It should be borne in mind, however, that as the highest level coordination body of the UN system, the CEB seeks to strengthen policy coherence and coordination among UN system organizations. In doing so, CEB does not develop, implement or monitor policies and cannot, therefore, be tasked with implementation.

40. A retreat for the Consultative Process was held from 3-5 June 2013, at Bogis-Bossey, Switzerland, to follow up on the senior officials' decision. The retreat brought together representatives from 32 UN entities, international organizations and academia to exchange lessons learned, share challenges in implementation and identify follow up options for implementation of the Sustainability Framework across the UN system<sup>18</sup>.

41. The key findings of the retreat included:

- The UN system has to its advantage a comprehensive array of sustainability related knowledge and skills. However, it needs to have better clarity at the conceptual level, as conflicting interpretations of Sustainable Development exists.
- To better manage these complexities and adopt the right approach, the UN needs to go beyond adoption of good practices, and promote intellectual pluralism, critical thinking, and multi-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary approaches.
- Both top-down and bottom-up approaches are in vogue in the UN. For several UN entities, sustainable development or its elements are a core activity of their normative work and hence expanding on it is relatively easier. Many UN organizations have made efforts to integrate sustainability from multi-year strategic plans to project level approaches. Others have employed bottom-up approaches with experiences from the national level informing wider strategic planning.
- A series of coordination mechanisms are in place in the UN, at all levels. Higher level integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development into the work of the UN system occurs through intergovernmental and interagency processes.
- The full breadth of the Sustainability Framework needs to be enhanced in its further development and implementation. Currently, there is more emphasis on environmental sustainability.
- Compliance, disclosure, grievance, redress and verification mechanisms need to be established and strengthened. Relevant mechanisms within the UN should be

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<sup>18</sup> The report of the retreat is provided to the senior officials and available in the EMG website: [www.emg.org](http://www.emg.org)

considered, such as the JIU, UNEG, Ombudsman mechanism or special rapporteurs on various issues, to determine whether they can play a role in ensuring accountability and if they need to be strengthened for that purpose.

- A common reporting system is needed. The Report of the Secretary-General on mainstreaming of the 3 dimensions of Sustainable Development throughout the UN system could be a likely vehicle for regular reporting on sustainability issues.
- Further consultations are needed to better understand and follow up on any legal issues related to the implementation of the Sustainability Framework.
- The key challenges that the agencies face include a lack of higher level commitment; unclear and inconsistent terminology and understanding; lack of policy coherence; tendency to work in sectoral silos; imbalances among the three dimensions of sustainable development; absence of a process to assess impact or measure progress; the challenges to scale-up success stories; lack of effective knowledge sharing mechanisms; resource constraints, especially decreasing budget forecasts; capacity building and change management issues; lack of a common support unit; and difficulties in integrating sustainability in joint programming.
- The drivers for initiating sustainability measures at the level of program and projects have been varied, and identified as often resulting from specific performance requirements from donors, including the GEF.
- There is a wide range of experience and capacity among entities that have embarked on sustainability measures. Many are at the beginning stages, sometimes with sporadic and disaggregated initiatives and no higher level vision/ policy or support to anchor and guide them. Few have made impressive progress whose experiences and lessons learned are shared with others.
- Most UN entities cited impact assessments as key to their efforts to mainstream sustainability and an important area for cooperation.
- In light of the Framework's broad scope and in support of the decision of the 18<sup>th</sup> EMG senior officials meeting to advance follow-up and implementation of the Framework, options for applying the Framework throughout the UN system need to be further explored. EMG has a continuing role to play in furthering the Framework and to serve as a learning and knowledge sharing platform for sustainability practitioners.
- The roadmap or Guide for implementation of the Sustainability Framework should provide guidance on how each entity could move ahead in implementing the Sustainability Framework. It should be an interim guide developed based on common experiences and practices of the UN agencies. It can be tested out for three years and then reviewed.
- In addition, an Options Paper should to be developed and presented to the 19<sup>th</sup> EMG SOM, to outline what needs to be done UN system-wide, for the follow up of the Sustainability Framework, its placement and implementation.

- A set of higher level and broad Core Principles that could be applied across the UN system could be developed and agreed upon, while individual UN entities could elaborate it further with more specific Core Values, including those that are entity specific. This could be tested out for three years and then reviewed.
- A high profile launch of the next phase of implementation of the Sustainability Framework can be planned, including the possibility for the Secretary General to send a letter to Heads of Agencies or few Heads of Agencies on making a joint launch.

42. In response to the decision of the senior officials, the Consultative Process, with the active role of its smaller Drafting Group, has prepared the following outputs:

- i. A draft Guide for implementation of the Sustainability Framework <sup>19</sup>,
- ii. A draft Options Paper on the follow up of the Sustainability Framework in the UN system
- iii. A draft set of core values, that could be taken up across the UN system
- iv. A knowledge sharing portal to allow exchange of information and lesson learned on sustainable practices among agencies

43. The Consultative Process suggests the following action for consideration of the 19<sup>th</sup> meeting of the EMG senior officials:

***Suggested Actions IV: Consultations on Advancing the Framework for Environmental and Social Sustainability in the UN system.***

The senior officials:

1. Welcome the report of the retreat of the Consultative Process, the draft Interim Guide for implementation of the Sustainability Framework by each UN agency and the draft Options Paper on the system-wide issues in the follow up of the Framework in the UN system;
2. Agree that each entity moves ahead in implementing the Sustainability Framework by benefiting from the Sustainability Guide;
3. Request the Chair of the EMG to take the necessary action in following up the recommendations on the follow up of the Framework in the UN system as provided in the draft Options Paper;
4. Decide to continue the Consultative Process to finalize the Guide and the Options Paper based on the feed-back received from UN system organizations and entities and inter-agency mechanisms.

<sup>19</sup> The guide is provided to the senior officials as a reference document available in the EMG website: <http://www.unemg.org/index.php/img-on-environmental-and-social-sustainability-meetings>

## 5. IMG on Environmental Sustainability Management in the United Nations system

44. At its meeting in November 2012, senior officials of the EMG agreed to seek guidance from the Chief Executives Board (CEB) on the implementation of the “*Strategic Plan for Sustainability Management*” prepared by the IMG. They also agreed to continue the IMG until 2014 and welcomed the support of the Sustainable UN facility as a UN common sustainability office to implement the strategic plan and deliver a system-wide response in integrating sustainable development considerations into the management of UN facilities and operations<sup>20</sup>.

45. Below are some highlights of the IMG’s activities between December 2012 and September 2013:

### *Climate neutrality*

46. The fourth common greenhouse gas inventory for the UN system - *Moving Towards a Climate Neutral UN –The UN system’s footprint and efforts to reduce it-* was published on 21 June 2013. The report included the greenhouse gas emissions inventories from 63 UN entities for 2011, and described their emission reduction efforts in 2012. It also included interviews with sustainability focal points that provided insights into the practical work of selected agencies. The data shows that the footprint of the UN system continues to be around 1.7 million tonnes CO2 eq and 8 tonnes CO2eq per capita, with only a very slight decrease since 2010. Though the results help to show overall emission trends and obvious causes, comparison of GHG emission data across years is still a technically complex issue for the system and for individual organisations. In an effort to ensure high quality data collection and accurate completion of the inventory, the Sustainable UN facility carried out 2 training sessions on inventory compilation ahead of the reporting time and maintained *help desk* services to provide IMG members with mentoring and tailored inventory advice.

47. In forthcoming years, reporting will need to go beyond GHG emission and appropriate tools will be needed for use by the UN system. The IMG is therefore considering the acquisition and adoption of a standard software able to provide sustainability data aggregation, visualization, diagnostics and a reporting platform, covering not only GHG emissions but also other indicators such as water and/ or waste.

### *Emission reductions and sustainability management: travel, facilities, sustainable procurement, field operations, communications*

48. IMG members continued to make progress in the preparation of their *emission reduction strategies* (ERS). While the vast majority of reporting entities are making efforts to reduce their environmental footprint, the statistics show that 10 UN organisations have an emission reduction strategy approved by senior management, 5 organisations are climate neutral, and 5 have taken concrete steps towards the implementation of an environmental management system. Approximately 30 organisations have drafted an emissions reductions strategy but are yet to obtain high level endorsement for its adoption. This remains an obstacle for the implementation of systematic measures to reduce the UN system’s GHG impact.

49. In close consultation with the IMG, the *Sustainable Procurement* Working Group of the High Level Committee on Management (HLCM) Procurement Network has continued its focus on concrete tender specifications and been supported in this by a *help desk* service provided by the Sustainable UN facility. In February 2013, an on-line training developed jointly by UNEP, UNOPS, ITCILO and ILO, “*Buying for a better world*”, was launched and has since been made mandatory or highly recommended to procurement staff in around 15 UN organizations. Despite ongoing uncertainties over pending UN General Assembly

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<sup>20</sup> (UN General Assembly (GA) Resolution 66/288 ‘The future we want’ and GA resolution 67/226 on the Quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, paragraph 15).

recommendations on this subject, sustainable procurement has continued to gain ground in practices, policies or as part of emission reduction strategies.

50. The work on sustainable facilities is being carried out in cooperation with the Working Group on Sustainability of the Inter-agency Network of Facility Managers. Under this umbrella, introductory guidance materials on Green Leasing and Energy audits have been prepared. In addition, a *help desk* service on energy management has been set up and has already delivered key advice on a number of facilities management issues such as the design of the proposed African Development Bank building in Nigeria.

51. The UN campaign *Greening the Blue* continued in 2013 and maintained an average of over 13,000 visits a month and an increase in Facebook and Twitter followers (5000 on average). Since its launch in June 2010, the Greening the Blue website has showcased 47 case studies and over 170 stories of best practices from across the UN system. It remains the reference point for UN staff on what is happening in the UN system and how to participate.

52. The IMG has identified staff training as a key means of achieving long-term reductions in the environmental impacts of the UN. UNDP and Sustainable UN have been developing a web-based training tutorial in consultation with the IMG Tutorial Working Group. The aim of the tutorial is to shift the UN's working culture and make change 'simple' by offering ideas on integrating green aspects into day-to-day operations. Add-on modules for procurement, facilities management or offset emissions are under consideration.

53. The IMG continues its close collaboration with the EMG Consultative Process on Environmental and Social Sustainability to ensure a coherent and consistent approach to the internal sustainability of the UN system and is closely involved in the work on the proposed peer review process.

#### ***Interagency discussion on sustainability management***

54. Following the decision of the senior officials at their 18<sup>th</sup> meeting on the implementation of the strategic plan on implementation of the environmental sustainability management for consideration of the CEB<sup>21</sup>, the IMG presented in February 2013 the briefing paper "*The Business Case for Environmental Management Systems in the United Nations*" developed jointly by UNEP and WFP.

55. The paper was presented by UNEP on behalf of the EMG at the HLCM spring session between 7-8 March 2013 and the related discussions resulted in a number of decisions both at HLCM and CEB levels on "Environmental Sustainability Management in the UN System" that have practical implications for the work of the EMG and of the IMG in particular.

56. The HLCM "*committed to the development and implementation of environmental sustainability management systems in each organization, through a gradual, voluntary and flexible process as described in the 'Strategic plan for environmental sustainability management in the UN system', focusing on low-investment and high return initiatives, and through mainstreaming of EMS in the programming and planning processes and increased coordination on this subject among the relevant HLCM networks. As part of the EMS approach, HLCM would aim to focus on making the concept of total cost of ownership fully integrated into procurement rules and practices*". The HLCM requested UNEP to continue their work of coordination, technical support and reporting, noting the system-wide benefits of efficiencies, knowledge and experience sharing, and mutual support, and invited UNEP to report to the HLCM on collective achievements and forward planning on behalf of the EMG.

57. Associated with this decision, the HLCM Strategic Plan for the period 2013-2016 indicates that: "*19. In considering innovative business models, HLCM will seek to achieve measurable progress to enhance environmental sustainability of UN operations, through joint initiatives possibly focused on facilities management and procurement*". The HLCM Strategic

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<sup>21</sup> "to inform and seek guidance from the CEB in 2013 on the follow up to and implementation of the strategic plan for environmental sustainability management, including the proposed creation of a common UN environmental sustainability management office" and to "clearly communicate to the HLCM, including IMG recommendations for minimum criteria for environmental sustainability management systems in the UN system"

Plan is linked to a series of concrete deliverables described in the HLCM Results Framework. UNEP, on behalf of the EMG, has been requested to report on a regular basis to the HLCM on progress.

58. On 5 April 2013, in Madrid, the CEB endorsed the HLCM decision and further detailed the engagement of UN principals towards EMS: “16. *When considering innovative business models, HLCM would engage to achieve measurable progress to enhance environmental sustainability of UN operations, as well as broaden the scope and ambition of its already advanced agenda on joint or collaborative operations through successful pilot initiatives. Specifically, HLCM would aim to rapidly move forward towards the development of options for consolidation and /or pooling of support services*”.

59. The IMG noted that the above decisions signify the following consequences for the UN system:

- i. Expansion of the commitment towards climate neutrality to encompass comprehensive environment management systems and therefore expansion and redirection of the key objectives of the IMG’s work;
- ii. Association of environmental sustainability with an innovative approach to UN business practices and the creation of an obligation for system-wide reporting on measurable progress;
- iii. Creation of a reporting link between the EMG and the HLCM/ CEB mechanism;
- iv. UNEP/ IMG to continue system-wide support for these expanded efforts (HLCM request) and to consolidate and/ or pool support services (CEB request);

60. In light of these important decisions, the IMG recommends the following to senior officials:

***Suggested Action V: System-wide commitments on Environmental Sustainability Management***

1. The senior officials welcome the decisions made by the HLCM and CEB to commit the UN system to the “*development and implementation of environmental sustainability management systems in each organization*” and to “*engage to achieve measurable progress to enhance environmental sustainability of UN operations*”.
2. The senior officials appreciate the links that have been created between the EMG and the HLCM and commit to report through UNEP to the HLCM on progress towards the development of environmental sustainability management systems on a yearly basis. A report will be sent to HLCM after each EMG SOM in consultation with the HLCM secretariat.
3. Taking into account the IMG experience to date and also the voluntary nature of the commitment to environmental sustainability management systems, senior officials agree to recommend to the HLCM that “*measurable progress to enhance environmental sustainability of UN operations*” be expressed in terms of progress against a series of agreed milestones, at least in the first instance.
4. Senior officials commend UNEP for the efforts made through the EMG in steering progress on internal environmental sustainability and invite UNEP to confirm with the HLCM its intention to continue its work of coordination, technical support and reporting and ;
5. In response to the CEB request to “*move forward towards the development of options for consolidation and /or pooling of support services*”, senior officials commit to join forces for the development of a common reporting service, based on experience with GHG inventory reporting, to enable the EMG to report to the

## 6. Peer-Review of Environmental Profiles of UN organizations

61. The EMG, in 2011, established an approach for peer reviewing of the environment portfolio among its members. At their 18<sup>th</sup> meeting in November 2012, senior officials of the EMG welcomed the pilot phase of the peer review process of EMG members for 2013-2014. They also welcomed the interest expressed by UNIDO, on behalf of the UN entities based in the Vienna International Centre, WMO and UNEP to volunteer for the peer-review. They requested the EMG secretariat to share progress made and lessons learned at their 19<sup>th</sup> meeting.

### Progress made

62. The peer-reviews pilot phase (2013-2014) has been designed<sup>22</sup> focusing on corporate environmental management of facilities and operations, and building on the accumulated international experience with peer reviewing in a variety of international organizations (e.g. mutual trust among peers, voluntary participation, non-binding recommendations).

63. For the reviews of WMO, UNIDO and UNEP, preparatory meetings and exchanges took place in the first part of 2013 to define the scope and boundaries for the review, the schedule and the composition of the expert teams. The expert team had detailed consultations with WMO including a three day site visit in May 2013. Similar consultations are planned for UNIDO in September 2013 and for UNEP in December 2013.

64. Early plans were made to form a Peer Review Body (PRB), which will have a managerial role for the program and will conduct the peer review on the basis of the reports drafted by the expert teams and the EMG. It will focus on achievements and best practices, as well as areas for progress with the approval of the recommendations for each individual review. The transfer of ownership of these recommendations in the hands of top management level will follow in the final 'release/ownership stage' of each individual review. The PRB will meet during 28-29 January 2014 in Geneva for the purpose of peer reviewing WMO and UNIDO and later in 2014 to review UNEP.

### Lessons learned so far

65. The chosen themes cover a range of corporate environment management concerns: GHG emissions from building/ facilities and air travel, typically standard across the reviews, while reviewed entities were given the option to choose two more themes from a range, including waste management, ICT and greening of meetings, water management and staff awareness, involvement and training. Each reviewed entity chose themes where they had accomplishments to present, as well as themes where they needed progress.

66. The boundary for the reviews varies significantly. For instance, the review of WMO is about the WMO itself and its service contractors, the review of UNIDO is on the whole set of buildings managed by UNIDO in Vienna (in practice the Vienna International Center), the review of UNEP is of UNEP's global operations.

67. The Peer Review expert teams typically include participation from EMG secretariat, supported by experts from UN entities (typically 2) and from interested local authorities (e.g. Geneva, Vienna). There is a strong interest for recommendations bringing environmental and economic benefits (i.e. cost savings) to be obtained from the reviews by UN entities.

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<sup>22</sup> See the paper 'Pilot Phase: Concept and Work Plan' and its Executive Summary.

### ***Suggested Action VI: Environmental Peer Reviews of the EMG members***

1. Senior officials thank WMO, UNIDO, and UNEP for volunteering to be peer reviewed, as well as other UN entities participating in the peer review expert teams.
2. They welcome the good progress made in the pilot phase of the peer review and preparation of the respective reports and express their interest to participate in the Peer Review Body at its forthcoming meetings in Geneva and New York in 2014.
3. They look forward to the assessment of the pilot phase (2013-2014) at their next meeting in 2014, including the final peer review reports.
4. They welcome the interest expressed by the UPU to be added in the peer-review program and invite other UN entities to join.

## **7. Addressing new issues**

68. In preparing the agenda of the 19<sup>th</sup> senior officials' meeting, the Chair of the EMG proposed to the EMG members to bring forward their suggestions on issues that warrant a UN system-wide approach and cooperation for discussion by the senior officials. This was in line with the mandate of EMG to identify issues on the international environmental agenda that warrant cooperation, and find ways of engaging its collective capacity in coherent management responses to those issues.

69. Following that, two issue papers were prepared by the EMG secretariat which suggest consideration of the following issues by the EMG senior officials:

*a) Preparing a UN system-wide approach to the sound management of chemicals<sup>23</sup>*

70. The Issue Paper suggests preparation of a possible UN system-wide approach by the EMG on sound management of chemicals to enhance synergies at global level for a practical delivery and supporting synergies at national level. The suggested approach is in response to the findings of the “*Global Chemicals Outlook Report*” and the decisions of various intergovernmental processes, including the Rio+20, the UN Environment Assembly of UNEP and the Conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions. These have called for a synergized and coherent approach by the UN system in supporting the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) and developing programmatic cooperation in the field that would support implementation of the three conventions in areas of common concern such as sustainable development, trade, customs (for example through the Green Customs Initiative), transport, public health, labour, environment, agriculture and industry for a better delivery and implementation at national level.

71. The purpose of the suggested approach is to facilitate the integration of sound management of chemicals into the international organizations charged with social and economic development, identifying opportunities for concrete collaborative actions at the national level and supporting mainstreaming of sound chemicals management into national development plans and processes.

72. The issue paper invites the senior officials to establish an Issue Management Group to prepare a possible contribution by the EMG to the sound management of chemicals agenda in line with paragraph 89 of the Rio+20 outcome document.

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<sup>23</sup> “*A UN System-wide Strategy for SMC: Unleashing the Power of UN Synergy for Practical Delivery on the Ground*”.



*b) Stocktaking of financing for international cooperation on environmental matters*<sup>24</sup>

73. The Issue Paper proposes a discussion by the senior officials meeting on whether a contribution by the EMG to the issue of enhancing coherent and effective funding of the environmental agenda within the broader context of financing for sustainable development, as outlined in the outcome document of the Rio+20 Conference<sup>25</sup>, would be useful. Elements for consideration would include: how environmental financing has evolved and how it can best be captured; what constitutes environmental funding and how environment-related financial flows should be categorized; whether the current data provides an adequate overview for policy makers; and whether a stocktaking by the EMG of existing financial flows for environment would add value. The issue paper propose to senior officials to consider whether a contribution on this issue by the EMG would be of value to the work of the UN Task Team Working Group on “Financing for sustainable development” which supports the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing.

***Suggested Action VII: Addressing new issues for future work of the EMG***

1. The senior officials agree to establish an Issue Management Group to prepare a UN system-wide approach to the sound management of chemicals and consider the progress made by the IMG at their next meeting.
2. The senior officials also agree to prepare a stocktaking report on financing for environment matters in the UN system for their consideration at the next senior officials meeting.

## **8. EMG Work Plan for 2014–2015**

74. The 18<sup>th</sup> senior officials’ meeting of EMG adopted the 2013-2014 EMG work plan. The plan has been updated to a 2014-2015 EMG work plan which reflects the suggested action put forward in the current note as presented in document EMG/SOM.19/04.

75. It is proposed that the work plan be given a two year horizon, i.e. be a plan for 2014 to 2015 (both years included), which is subject to annual approval by the senior officials. The plan is organized according to four main expected accomplishments as they pertain to programmatic, management and operational issues as well as overall cooperation.

76. The work plan remains un-costed as long as there is no common budget for EMG activities. It is recommended that the work plan is implemented through in-kind contribution subject to the availability of resources. The in-kind contribution will be budgeted, programmed and reported on by each member and the UNEP secretariat within their own administrative processes.

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<sup>24</sup> Taking Stock of Funding for International Environmental Governance

<sup>25</sup> Paragraphs 255- 256 of the Rio+20 outcome document.

***Suggested Action VIII: Approval of the work plan for EMG for the period 2014 – 2015***

The senior officials approve the work plan for EMG for the period 2014 – 2015 based on the understanding that the EMG secretariat will revise the plan presented in document EMG/SOM.19/04 to ensure that the plan fully reflects the actions agreed by the 19<sup>th</sup> senior officials meeting of the EMG. The work plan will be implemented on the basis of in-kind contributions from members and is subject to availability of resources.

**9. Process for reporting to the UN Environment Assembly of UNEP**

77. The 18<sup>th</sup> senior officials' meeting of the EMG requested the Chair to circulate a draft report on the EMG to the first universal session of the UNEP Governing Council/ Global Ministerial Environment Forum for their comments. The draft report was circulated to the Governing Council members for comments and then presented as document UNEP/GC.27/15/Add.1 to the first universal session of the UNEP Governing Council/ Global Ministerial Environment Forum held in Nairobi, Kenya 18-23 February 2013.

78. The Council in its decision UNEP/GC.27/5 on "Coordination Across the United Nations System including the Environment Management Group" expressed its appreciation of the progress report prepared under the guidance of the senior officials of the EMG at their 18<sup>th</sup> meeting and as presented by the Executive Director of UNEP. It commended the EMG on its progress in facilitating cooperation across the UN system to assist Member States in implementing the environmental agenda.

79. The Governing Council welcomed and supported the work of the EMG in contributing to the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and preparing for consideration by the Conference of the Parties to the UNCCD at its 11th session, a United Nations system-wide action plan for the period 2012–2018 on follow-up to its report on drylands. It also encouraged the Group to continue its contribution to advancing sustainability in the work of the United Nations system, including on Environmental Sustainability Management and Peer Reviews and the Framework for Environmental and Social Sustainability.

80. The Governing Council requested the UNEP Executive Director, in his capacity as Chair of the EMG, to provide a progress report on the Group's work to the governing body of UNEP at its next session as well as the governing bodies of the Group's member organizations, through the heads of those organizations, for their information.

81. The UNGA is informed of the work of the EMG through the submission of the proceedings of the Environment Assembly of UNEP. The UNGA requested to be informed about the work of the EMG in its resolution A/RES/58/209.

***Suggested Action IX: Reporting to the UN Environment Assembly of UNEP***

The senior officials welcome the opportunity to inform the UN Environment Assembly of UNEP and the Assembly to the UN General Assembly, of its work. The meeting appreciates the guidance received from the UNEP governing body and requests the Chair to continue the practice of circulating a draft of the report by EMG on its work to members of the Group for their comments, and submit the final report to the second UN Environment Assembly of UNEP.

## **10. Date and venue of the next senior officials meeting**

82. In preparing for the senior officials' meeting, the Chair has continued the practice of seeking the views of members on the agenda and to informally consult on dates and venues. This practice will be continued for the 20<sup>th</sup> senior officials meeting scheduled to take place in September 2014.

### ***Suggested Action X: Date and venue of the next senior officials meeting***

The senior officials request the EMG secretariat to circulate to the members of the EMG the date and venues for the 20<sup>th</sup> meeting of the senior officials, and consult with members on its agenda.