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Second Committee**

**Agenda item 98 (a):
Environment and Sustainable Development
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**Statement of the
Executive Director
Of the United Nations Environment Programme
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Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

It is a privilege for me, on behalf of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), to introduce for your consideration the report of the UNEP Governing Council on the work of its 21st session, held in Nairobi in February of this year (A/56/25), which you have before you.

The Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum met in the backdrop of the preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development and concentrated on providing concrete guidance, from an environmental policy perspective, for developing the road map to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in September 2002. In doing so, the Council was aware that the Summit provides an opportunity for the international community to critically examine the new systemic environmental challenges, which, if not addressed adequately, could endanger the future stability of our development path.

Last February, our Governing Council, despite its determination to improve our capacity to solve difficult problems, were far from envisaging the new and extremely challenging situation that faces us today. We can only be deeply affected by the overall somber international atmosphere and the grim economic message, which have prevailed in this General Assembly session. But we also feel encouraged that the Second Committee in its general debate expressed its determination to overcome the challenges that the international community faces since the 11 September and the recent global economic downturn, by underscoring the urgency of promoting sustainable development and strengthen international cooperation to foster peace, social and economic progress.

These priorities were at the centre of the Council's consultations in February. The Council highlighted key issues such as the impact of globalization, the growing gap between rich and poor and its implications for the environment and for security, the growing need for cooperation and the increasing realization of our interdependence, and the need for tolerance and dialogue.

Pursuant to resolution 55/200, the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum underscored the need for UNEP to play an important role in the preparatory process for the Summit. In this context I am particularly pleased to take this opportunity to update the Committee on the progress made with regard to UNEP governance and to international environmental governance, which emerged as key issues in our Council deliberation. Decision 21/20 on UNEP governance and the implementation of GA resolution 53/242 responds to the call for strengthening UNEP and broadening its financial base and ensuring stable and predictable funding. UNEP governance issues were discussed in the broader context of international environmental governance, in its recognition that the strengthening of UNEP would ensure its stronger international environmental governance.

In this context, the Council stressed that sustaining the ecosystem of our planet requires global efforts and not a continuation of unrelated attempts at addressing problems in isolation from one another. Reaffirming the link between environment and development within the overall concept of sustainable development, the Council, in decision 21/21 on the review of the state of international environmental governance, decided to establish an open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Ministers or their representatives to undertake a comprehensive policy-oriented assessment of existing institutional weaknesses as well as future needs and options for strengthened international environmental governance, including the financing of the organization, with a view to presenting a report containing analysis and options to the special session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum in Cartagena in February 2002.

The Council also decided that its next session should undertake an in depth review to provide its input on future requirements of international environmental governance to the preparatory process of WSSD in the broader context of multilateral efforts for sustainable development.

The work of IGM/IEG is intended to build on recent advances, including the report of the Secretary-General's Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements and General Assembly resolution 53/242 which supported the establishment of the Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF) and the Environment Management Group (EMG) and made other important recommendations on strengthening the current environmental governance regime.

The broad conclusions emanating from the first two meetings in the IGM/IEG process (18 April 2001 in New York and on 17 July 2001 in Bonn), provided a basis for proposing a set of "building blocks" as input to the third meeting, held on 9-10 September 2001 in Algiers. The third meeting was characterized by a rich and substantive exchange of views. Two working groups were established to discuss the contents of the "building blocks" document and the meeting subsequently concurred that its output be reflected in an updated document, which would form the basis for negotiations at the fourth IGM/IEG meeting on 30 November and the 1st of December 2001 in Montreal.

In addition, it was decided that additional building blocks dealing with capacity building, technology transfer and financial assistance as well as the inter-relationship between IEG and sustainable development could be added to the document. All the relevant IEG documentation are available on the UNEP website (www.unep.org/ieg)

In order to provide a further substantive contribution to the Summit, the Council also adopted a number of far-reaching decisions in the area of chemicals, related to the Rotterdam Convention, the POPs Convention, a new global assessment of mercury, lead in gasoline and, a key decision (21/7) on strategic approaches to international chemicals management. Also with regard to the UNEP subprogramme on technology, industry and economics, the Council adopted decision 21/14 on making trade and environment policies mutually supportive. Furthermore as a follow up to its first Global Ministerial Environment Forum in Sweden in May 2000, the Council adopted decision 21/18 on

“Implementation of the Malmö Ministerial Declaration”, which stresses that the Declaration constitutes a significant contribution of the world’s environment ministers to the preparatory process of the Johannesburg Summit. On the issue of application of international legal instruments, the Council also adopted decision 21/24 on policy advisory services in key areas of institution building.

Decision 21/27 on compliance with and enforcement of multilateral environmental agreements mandates the Executive Director to develop draft guidelines on compliance, capacity-strengthening and on effective national environmental enforcement in combating environmental crime as a priority issue. An expert level meeting on this subject just concluded on Friday at UNEP Headquarters in Nairobi and will be submitting their recommendations to the next GMEF to be held in Cartagena in February 2002.

Mr. Chairman,

Also consistent with the General Assembly mandate for the preparations for the Johannesburg Summit entrusted to UNEP, a series of collaborative efforts required to make the preparatory process for Johannesburg a success has been undertaken.

At the regional level UNEP is actively supporting the regional reviews of the implementation of the Rio agreements and Agenda 21 and is making available a number of reports including the Malmoe Declaration, the GEO 3 report and its by product including the African and other regional environment outlook reports; the report on UNEP’s contribution to the implementation of Agenda 21, and task manager reports as well as joint task manager reports on sectoral and cross-sectoral issues.

With DESA, the Regional Economic Commissions of the UN, UNDP as well as with a number of intergovernmental bodies, UNEP’s role at the regional level also entails high political profile intergovernmental dialogues, including civil society and industry consultations, which have contributed to the governmental prepcoms. The involvement and full engagement of these stakeholders will be crucial for building the necessary partnerships to ensure the implementation of sustainable development goals.

In addition to the Governing Council’s decision concerning international environmental governance, UNEP will also provide the Summit with its assessment of the latest state of the global environment. GEO3 will take a 30 years retrospective and 30 years forward looking perspective, with a view to reframing the way international community understand and respond to the environment in the new millennium. UNEP will also provide a series of sectoral assessment including interalia the Global International Water Assessment (GIWA), the pilot phase of the millennium Ecosystem Assessment. As you know the third assessment report of the UNEP/WMO Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is already available and constitutes an important contribution to the international negotiations on climate change.

Additionally, with regard to our activities related to industry, UNEP has undertaken three parallel initiatives: a series of sectoral reports, whereby international sectoral industry

organizations take stock of progress toward sustainable development and outline future challenges; regional consultation processes through which multi-stakeholder for a put forward key industry and sustainability issues for the consideration of decision-makers; and an overview report by UNEP on industry's progress of the implementation of Agenda 21, which will document global developments at both aggregate and sectoral level.

To conclude, Mr. Chairman, the 21st session of the Governing Council has defined a challenging work programme for UNEP, which confirms the confidence that Member States hold in the pivotal role of the organization in implementing effectively the environmental dimension of sustainable development. In addition to those decisions that I have already mentioned, several decisions were taken on important matters ranging from oceans and marine environment, water, environmental emergency and prevention, and support to Africa. We are also strongly encouraged by the widespread participation of governments, civil society, the academic community and the private sector in the preparatory process. The overall conclusion is that while some work has been done on the implementation of Agenda 21 so much more needs to be undertaken. A rapid review of the documentation developed to date by the various sub regions reveals that the general expectations of the Summit are tremendous and there is a strong desire for concrete outcomes covering several fundamental areas that cut across all regions.

From our perspective, for the global debate in Johannesburg to live up to the level of the expectations it has raised so far through its preparatory process, depends on our ability to address adequately challenging questions. UNEP, in cooperation with its partners, is committed to tackle these challenges during the preparatory process in order to make Johannesburg 2002 a success and to translate our sustainability agenda into a reality for the 21st century.

Thank you.