



United Nations Environment Programme

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PROGRAMME DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT • PROGRAMA DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS PARA EL MEDIO AMBIENTE

ПРОГРАММА ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ ОБЪЕДИНЕННЫХ НАЦИЙ ПО ОКРУЖАЮЩЕЙ СРЕДЕ

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Statement
by

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United Nations Environment Programme

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Thank you Mr. Chairman.

It is a privilege for me to once again have this opportunity to address the Second Committee on behalf of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and to introduce for your consideration the report of the seventh special session of our Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC/GMEF) held in early February 2002 in Cartagena, Colombia. I would also like to take this opportunity to highlight our future plans in response to the challenging international priorities defined and agreed upon during this very rich year of progress and constructive commitments reached at the major international conferences.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

The uncertain international atmosphere and the difficult situation of the world economy have been highlighted in your debate. In response to this assessment, we have adopted in UNEP an overarching objective for our work under the motto “Environment for Development”, which is for us more relevant today than ever. The three conferences- Doha, Monterrey and Johannesburg - had one overall objective - To concentrate on the common good - To dedicate all our efforts and means to fight poverty - To reduce the growing gap between rich and poor in a globalising world in which this division is the root of many of our problems.

The common denominator for all our efforts is increasingly clear. No more abstract concepts and high-level declarations are needed. We need to concentrate on concrete and measurable implementation.

We need a real development round in trade. We need to open markets and to fight against economically and environmentally perverse subsidies, especially in agriculture. We must do more to reduce the debt burden, especially of the LDCs, fully implement the HIPC initiative and reverse the negative trend in ODA.

These measures can potentially do more for the global environment than all our good intentions which are not acted on.

To realize the MDGs, and to meaningfully move forward on the concrete targets and timetables and commitments of WSSD, we need action-oriented tools. In this regard, NEPAD provides an example of a new and stimulating development for the great continent of Africa, where UNEP is very proud to be headquartered.

Another common denominator is that our efforts to overcome poverty need functioning environmental services and a healthy environment and natural resource base is essential to development. Interrelationships between environment and poverty are increasingly clear. It is also clear that unsustainable consumption and production patterns in the developed world are an important source for the environmental problems at global and national levels as well as the underlying factors contributing to the vicious circle of poverty, underdevelopment and



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environmental degradation. Under UNEP's mandate for assessment and early warning, GEO3 was prepared as a contribution to Johannesburg, which provided policy makers with an authoritative assessment of the state of the environment and its implications for all aspects of sustainable development. This provides a clear proof of the environmental burden on development, as is evidenced by agreements reached on:

- The increasing severity of desertification and land degradation leading to its designation as an issue area of GEF
- The dramatic decrease in biodiversity and genetic resources leading to calls for an agreement on access and benefit sharing, on indigenous knowledge and cultural diversity.
- The increasing threat of chemicals on human health leading to the PIC and POP conventions agreements and calls for agreements on heavy metals, labeling and the twenty year programme
- The drastic consequences of climate change impacting most of all on the poor and especially small island developing states leading to calls for the ratification of Kyoto for mitigation, the call of the Delhi declaration for adaptation, and the need for renewable energy.
- The unsustainable consumption and productions patterns leading to the call for a ten year programme

Add to this oceans and freshwater and UNEP's response through the GPA, regional seas, GEMS water and GIWA.

All of this demonstrates that environment can no longer be considered a luxury but it's a vital resource for development.

That is UNEP's mandate, that is our vision, and these are our areas of concentration. We are open for, and aware of the need for increased cooperation within the UN system, with civil society and with private business that is aware of its corporate responsibility.

As a contribution to WSSD, the UNEP GC/GMEF at its last session in Cartagena adopted strong decisions in this direction. The Council adopted a forward-looking decision on a new global strategy for reducing the environmental and health risks from toxic chemicals and hazardous wastes.

Under the decision, Governments requested a stocktaking exercise to pinpoint crucial gaps in mankind's knowledge on chemicals and wastes. Other important contributions include initiatives such as UNEP's water policy, which addressed in a more holistic manner both fresh and marine water resources particularly in the context of the Global Programme of Action and the further integration of river basin management with marine and coastal area management.

Mr. Chairman,

Our Governing Council and our preparation for the Summit were largely driven by the recognition



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of the integral relationship between environment and development. Recognizing that the international system still has a long way to go in integrating the three pillars of sustainable development, it is thus with the same spirit and led by the theme, I earlier mentioned, -- "Environment for Development" -- that UNEP is determined to contribute actively to the follow up of the Summit.

As we are preparing for our next GC/GMEF, our attention now focuses on ensuring that our plans respond to the needs and priorities defined in the WSSD Plan of Implementation and the MDGs. In particular, we need to assess the implications for our future programme of work of the decision on international environmental governance. It will greatly affect our capacity to respond quickly and effectively to the emerging environmental challenges, as well as to contribute actively to the renewed implementation commitments.

Among the key elements of this decision are provisions for strengthening the role and structure of the GC/GMEF in order to improve the coherence in international environmental policy making and on the role of the Environmental Management Group (EMG) to enhance the coordination across the United Nations system. The decision also calls for a strengthened programme of capacity building at national and regional level, building on its demonstrated comparative advantage and further developing its ongoing strategic partnership with GEF and UNDP.

We are also, as agreed in Cartagena, developing methods for improved coordination among and effectiveness of the multitude of Multilateral Environmental Agreements in existence. The decision further calls for the strengthening of the role and financial situation of the organization and in this regard UNEP has developed a proposal for an Indicative Scale of Assessments. The proposal will be tabled for discussion at the next GC/GMEF in February 2003 and envisages a pilot phase leading up to the 2004/2005 biennium.

We have given special attention to ensuring stable, adequate and predictable financing of UNEP. I am proud to say that we are meeting our target of 100 countries contributing to the Environment Fund while last year, we had 83. Following our communication to governments concerning the Indicative Scale of Contributions, I was extremely happy to receive a letter from the Minister of Environment of Eritrea, a developing country in difficult conditions, agreeing to meet its indicative contribution under this scale, for the first time. I believe this is a great achievement and an indicator of the growing confidence of governments that we are going in the right direction.

We are also seeing important progress in strengthening our headquarters in Nairobi. We have advanced 1.4 million dollars from the UNEP reserve for the construction of new facilities to meet the increasing demand for space. There is no longer any questioning of Nairobi as an appropriate headquarters location for UNEP.

However, we continue to face some difficulties. The regular budget contribution to UNEP continues to be less than five percent of our resources. We continue to pay rent for our office space to UNHQ in New York, which approximates what we receive from regular budget. These are issues that must



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be addressed.

The next GC/GMEF will also be considering the draft 2004-2005 programme of work for the organization, which has identified three main spheres of action. Well aware that it is the state of the environment that tells us whether our policies and programmes are effective, our first priority is to strengthen our environmental monitoring, assessment and early warning activities – a long-standing area of concentration - to continue to ensure that environmental policy-making is built on solid scientific foundations.

In response to the increasing need to highlight interlinkages among the sectors and to identify gaps and opportunities as they relate to crosscutting issue areas, UNEP will also concentrate its efforts on promoting policy integration. This is a comprehensive approach to policy making, aimed at addressing key underlying issues such as production and consumption patterns, climate change and the link between globalization and sustainable development.

Finally, a driving force behind the global commitment reached at Johannesburg was the realization that partnerships are key to realistically pursue sustainable development – that a comprehensive and coherent international approach to the implementation of sustainable development has to include the involvement and partnerships both within the different sectors of governments as well as between governments and major groups. UNEP has a long-standing experience with the private sector, particularly through sectoral initiatives, industry-specific voluntary initiatives and codes of conduct.

We have also renewed our efforts to engage civil society at large, and youth in particular, in our work and new strategies in these areas will be discussed at the next GC/GMEF. We feel confident that with such experience and determination we can facilitate this process and enhance our role as a strategic partner.

Mr. Chairman,

UNEP intends to be a full and effective partner and a positive force to achieve the promise of the WSSD. In our view, the WSSD was a success but its success must be tested by implementation. We commit ourselves to this task of implementation.

Thank you very much.
