

20/17

Views of the Governing Council on the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on environment and human settlements

The Governing Council,

Taking into account the fact that the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on environment and human settlements (A/53/463) is under consideration in the General Assembly and also taking into account the request of the Secretary-General to the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme to provide its views thereon,

Recalling the Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme, adopted by the Governing Council at its nineteenth session which emphasizes that the United Nations Environment Programme has been and must continue to be the principal United Nations body in the field of the environment and that its role is to be the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, that promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and that serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment,

Recalling its decisions 19/32 of 4 April 1997, on the governance of the United Nations Environment Programme, and SS.V/2 of 22 May 1998, on revitalization, reform and strengthening of the United Nations Environment Programme, in which it decided, inter alia, to review the ongoing reform of the United Nations Environment Programme,

Noting the distinction made by the Secretary-General between recommendations requiring action at the Secretariat level from those requiring decisions and measures at the intergovernmental level,

1. Responds to the request of the Secretary-General to the Governing Council and decides to express its views as follows:

The Governing Council:

(a) Welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on Environment and Human Settlements (A/53/463) submitted to the fifty-third session of the United Nations General Assembly, in which he puts forth the recommendations of the United Nations Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements on reforming and strengthening United Nations activities in the field of environment and human settlements, and expresses its appreciation for the comprehensive and forward-looking recommendations of the Task Force under the chairmanship of the Executive Director;

(b) Notes with appreciation the intention of the President of the General Assembly that the Assembly, at its current session, consider in a fully open and transparent manner, as soon as possible, the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on environment and human settlements;

(c) Takes note of the recommendations intended for action by intergovernmental bodies relating to linkages among and support to environmental and environment-related conventions;

intergovernmental forums; and involvement of major groups, as outlined in part IV of the report of the Secretary-General on environment and human settlements;

(d) Welcomes the general thrust of the actions proposed to be taken by the Secretary-General and the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme at the Secretariat level relating to: inter-agency coordination; linkages among and support to environmental and environment-related conventions; the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) and the United Nations Office at Nairobi; information, monitoring, assessment and early warning; involvement of major groups; and future initiatives, as outlined in part III of the report of the Secretary-General on environment and human settlements;

(e) Expresses its support for the proposal of the Secretary-General regarding the establishment of an Environmental Management Group for the coordination of the environmental and human settlements activities of the United Nations system, and encourages the Secretary-General to undertake consultations with the members of the Administrative Committee on Coordination to develop its scope, appropriate criteria for membership and working methods in a flexible and cost-effective manner for its expeditious establishment;

(f) Welcomes the proposals for the facilitation and support by the United Nations Environment Programme of enhanced coordination amongst the bureaux and secretariats of environment and environment related conventions, taking into account the status of the respective convention secretariats and the autonomy of the conferences of the parties to these conventions, and in this regard notes its decision 20/18 B of 4 February 1999, on environmental conventions;

(g) Expresses its support for the proposal of the Secretary-General that an annual ministerial level, global environmental forum be instituted and that regular biennial sessions of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme constitute that forum in the years that it meets, and that in alternate years the forum should take the form of the special session of the Governing Council meeting in different regions as a ministerial-level forum in which participants can gather to review important and emerging policy issues in the field of the environment, and keeping in mind the need to retain the effective and efficient functioning of the governance mechanisms of the United Nations Environment Programme, as well as possible financial implications;

(h) Welcomes the recommendations of the Secretary-General on future action-oriented agendas of the Governing Council and the structuring and timing of its meetings in order to enhance coordination with the Commission on Sustainable Development and the conference of the parties to environmental and environment-related conventions;

(i) Takes note of the proposal concerning universal membership of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme and the on-going debate in this regard;

(j) Agrees with the proposal of the Secretary-General that, particularly in the light of the recommendation to establish an annual ministerial-level forum, the future role of the United Nations Environment Programme High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials should be considered;

(k) Welcomes the proposals of the Secretary-General on further enhancing the role of the United Nations Environment Programme in providing environmental advocacy, analysis and advice in shaping the priorities and programmes of the Global Environment Facility consistent with the United Nations Environment Programme's envisaged role in the Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured Global Environment Facility, and in this regard notes its decision 20/7 of 5 February 1999, on the Global Environment Facility;

(l) Welcomes the recommendations concerning the facilitation of coherent approaches to the need to constructively engage non-governmental organizations and civil society in the work of the United Nations, in the light of the experiences gained in the Habitat II and Commission on Sustainable Development processes;

(m) Expresses the hope that its views will assist in further deliberations and an expeditious resolution of this important matter in the competent forums;

2. Requests the Executive Director to convey the views of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme, as contained in this decision to the Secretary-General.