

## **REVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PLAN OF ACTION OF THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR CHILDREN AND CONSIDERATION OF FUTURE ACTION**

### **I. Contribution of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to the achievement of the goals and strategies enunciated in the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration in the 1990s, adopted by the World Summit for Children (WSC): actions undertaken under paragraph 35 of the Plan of Action.**

1. Deteriorating environmental conditions have their most profound impact on children. All children are exposed, from the prenatal phase, to a barrage of environmental threats to their survival, health and development. Conversely, children are also dynamic and powerful protagonists for a more environmentally stable world. These inter-linkages were clearly and comprehensively presented in the *1990 State of the Environment* report on *Children and the Environment*, which was jointly produced by UNEP and UNICEF, and widely distributed within the United Nations system, and to policy makers, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) worldwide.
2. UNEP's Governing Council considered the report at its sixteenth session in May 1991. In its decision 16/15 A, the Council, noting with appreciation the report and the cooperation of UNICEF in its preparation, outlined the concept of inter-generational equity and emphasised that, "poverty, underdevelopment, inadequate health and sanitation services, and environmental degradation are the main causes of mortality, morbidity and stunted growth and development of children", and that, "children have the greatest stake in the preservation of the environment and its judicious management for sustainable development as their survival and development depend on it". In light of this, the Governing Council requested UNEP's Executive Director to accord the highest priority to activities directly related to the achievement of relevant goals and strategies enunciated in the WSC Declaration and Plan of Action, with priority given to: (a) formal and informal environmental education of children; (b) programmes to enhance the awareness of children; and (c) programmes to enhance the environmental awareness and the active participation of women in environmental protection measures, for their health and well-being and that of their children.
3. As underscored in the WSC Declaration, "each day, millions of children suffer from the scourges of poverty and ...from degradation of the environment" (paragraph 5). In this context, the international community declared that it would, "work for common measures for the protection of the environment, at all levels, so that all children can enjoy a safer and healthier future" (paragraph 20. (9)). The Plan of Action devotes a section on children and the environment (paragraphs 26-27), noting that the "child survival and development goals proposed for the 1990s seek to improve the environment by combating disease and malnutrition and promoting education", and that "these contribute to lowering death rates as well as birth rates, improved social services, better use of natural resources and, ultimately, to the breaking of the vicious cycle of poverty and environmental degradation".

Consequently, the Plan of Action stresses that “programmes for children that not only help to meet their basic needs but which inculcate in them respect for the natural environment with the diversity of life that it sustains and its beauty and resourcefulness that enhance the quality of human life, must figure prominently in the world's environmental agenda”.

4. Accordingly, over the last decade, UNEP has been working, with its partners, to ensure that children around the world can grow up and be nurtured in a physical environment that is safe, protected from environmental threats to their health. Through the environmental health-related activities that are infused throughout its biennial work programmes, and its role in the development and implementation of an expanding body of environmental law, UNEP has assisted the international community in crafting innovative responses, building and enhancing processes to address the most pressing environmental challenges which threaten human health. UNEP has also, through its *Children and Youth Programme*, worked on various levels to educate and empower young people to participate in protecting the natural resources upon which their futures depend, including through the development of environmental information and awareness campaigns and the organization of conferences for children and youth.
5. In March 1997, in recognition of the need to address the close relationship and interaction between the environmental factors and the survival, protection and development of children, UNEP and UNICEF concluded a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Several areas were identified to serve as the basis for collaborative and mutually complementary initiatives including, advocacy in areas of common concern, scientific and technical cooperation on programme activities, and collaboration within UN system-wide initiatives and mechanisms. The ultimate objective of enhanced collaboration is to support programme implementation through the best scientific and environmental information that bears on children and child health, especially at the field level in developing countries. The conclusion of the UNEP-UNICEF MoU was reported to UNEP's Governing Council at its 20<sup>th</sup> session (in document UNEP/GC.20/INF/4). Since 1997, the MoU has both strengthened cooperation at the working level, and has served as a framework within which specific collaborative activities have been and are being undertaken.

#### **Activities related to children's environmental health**

6. The quality of the physical environment is an essential determinant of whether a child survives the first year of life and their further physical and mental development. Growing children are particularly vulnerable as their physical characteristics and childhood activities put them at greater risk from environmental hazards. Furthermore, environmental pollution and resource degradation are among the underlying causes of poverty and malnutrition, of which the impacts are most severely manifested on children, especially in ecologically vulnerable areas. As was explicitly recognized in the *Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21*, adopted at the 19<sup>th</sup> Special Session of the General Assembly in June 1997,

“protecting children from environmental health threats and infectious disease is particularly urgent since children are more susceptible than adults to those threats”. This echoes what has been accepted in numerous international fora and agreements including Agenda 21 and the Habitat Agenda.

7. Accordingly, UNEP has been working to address the range of environmental hazards that can threaten child health, from those essentially deriving from poverty, including a lack of access to safe water, poor environmental sanitation, indoor air pollution and a high prevalence of disease vectors, to those threats resulting from rapid development without adequate health and environment safeguards and unsustainable consumption, such as air and water pollution, inadequate waste management, hazardous wastes, and the unsafe use of chemicals.
8. In August 1999, recognising the need to forge stronger partnerships to combat the increasing threat of environmentally linked diseases, UNEP's Executive Director and the Director-General of the World Health Organisation (WHO) signed a MoU in the field of environmental health, thereby pledging to pool the strengths of both organizations. The MoU serves to cement long-standing cooperation through a series of joint efforts in the field of monitoring and assessment of air, water and food contamination by physical, chemical and biological agents; environmentally sound management of chemicals; and the environmental and health impacts of global environmental change. Collaborative activities are, *inter alia*, envisaged in the areas of climate change, global surveillance of environmentally caused diseases, environmental health of the people in the Arctic region and environmental emergencies. UNEP and WHO will also work to undertake health and environmental assessments of proposed policies and programmes, in order to evaluate the relationship between health, environment, development and economics, and integrate environmental health into national economic policies, legislation and management. Cooperation in a number of fields is also being strengthened, such as screening of chemicals before they reach the market and programmes to improve water quality.
9. UNEP has produced and contributed to numerous publications in the field of environmental health. For example, the 1998-1999 World Resources Report, published by the World Resources Institute, UNEP, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the World Bank, focussed on *Environmental Change and Human Health*, devoting various sections to the vulnerability of children to environmental hazards. In 1998, UNEP also contributed to a UNICEF Programme Division Working Paper on *Children and the Environment*. In 1999, UNEP and India's Tata Energy Research Institute published a book on the *Domestic Environment and the Health of Women and Children*, which assessed the state of knowledge, contemporary situation and status of scientific data linking the household environment in developing countries to the health of women and children. The book addresses environmental health hazards linked to housing, fuel shortage and indoor pollution, water supply and sanitation, and nutritional status, identifies critical knowledge gaps and research needed, and provides a series of policy options, guidelines, possible interventions and regulatory tools for improving their health.

Furthermore, in early 2000, UNEP published a technical study entitled, *An Assessment of Risks and Threats to Human Health Associated with the Degradation of Ecosystems*. The report attempts to explain the consequences of environmental change and deterioration of ecosystems due to factors such as the unsustainable growth in the use of resources, depletion of the ozone layer, the unprecedented loss of biological diversity, increased atmospheric concentrations of CO<sub>2</sub> and the impact of the unsafe management of pesticides and chemicals, on human health, analysing global, regional and national trends. The report underscores the need for the production, collection and analysis of information, as well as enhanced interdisciplinary collaboration, so as to ensure that both environmental and public health considerations are incorporated more fully into the development process.

10. UNEP has also encouraged the work and initiatives of various NGO and academic institutions in the field of environmental health, often coordinating its support with UNICEF, for example with regard to the establishment of an *International Network on Children's Environmental Health*, which is also supported by WHO. UNEP, in collaboration with New York University, the World Conservation Society, the Television Trust for the Environment, and WWF, has also supported the dissemination of information on health, the environment and development for use in local schools, print media, radio and television, through the *Outreach Network* and its newsletter and educational and information packs. UNEP has also participated in NGO activities such as the annual conferences organised by the 'World Information Transfer' on health and the environment, which are held during sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and often address the child health dimension. UNEP has also supported the children's environmental health work of academic institutions such as Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York.
11. As the WSC Plan of Action stresses, a major factor affecting the health of children is the availability of clean water and safe sanitation, and an important related benefit of universal access to water and sanitation combined with health education will be the control of many water-borne diseases (paragraphs 11-12). UNEP has an important role in assessing freshwater resources, supporting the development of practical measures to guarantee the health of the freshwater environment, and promoting the adoption of an integrated approach to the environmentally sustainable management of water resources, which is fundamental for protecting freshwater ecosystems, water quality and thus human health. In this regard, UNEP has developed a new water policy and strategy, comprising three core components which stress the cross-sectoral nature of water issues: assessment, management and coordination of actions. A central UNEP concern is to promote a "fair share" water strategy at national, sub-regional and regional levels. As such, the UNEP water strategy calls for a fair share for the poor; a fair share among competing uses; a fair share for local communities, and for women and children, as well as for the environment.
12. UNEP also works extensively on water resource management issues through the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Sub-Committee on Water Resources, and the Secretary-General's Special Initiative on Africa, within which it

chairs the Working Group on Water, which focuses, *inter alia*, on the promotion of equitable access to water; sustainable use of freshwater; meeting urgent water needs to assure household water security and water for food production; and managing water for African cities.

13. UNEP has been working on various levels to combat the negative effects of chemical exposure on human health. Studies have confirmed that absorption of lead into the body has detrimental effects, particularly on the early development of nervous systems in children and fetuses. Consequently, in 1997 UNEP and UNICEF, within the framework of their MoU, jointly published a booklet on *Childhood Lead Poisoning: Information for Advocacy and Action*. The booklet, which aims to reduce the adverse health and environmental impacts of lead, explains how children are affected by lead poisoning, and sets out various ways to combat the threats posed by lead exposure. It is intended as a tool for advocacy and action in the hands of policy-makers, communities and everybody caring for children. The booklet, which was also translated into French and Spanish, was widely distributed, particularly through UNICEF's field offices. The second in a UNEP-UNICEF series of booklets addressing environmental threats to child health is being produced on the issue of *Childhood Pesticide Poisoning*.
14. Furthermore, at its 18<sup>th</sup> session in May 1995, UNEP's Governing Council, in its decision 18/35, called on Governments to give full consideration to the costs and benefits of phasing out lead in gasoline and urged countries that have already or begun to do so, as well as international organisations and financial institutions, to assist other countries in their efforts to achieve such a phase out, and invited UNEP to participate in these efforts. Accordingly, in September 1998, UNEP published a report entitled, *Lead at the Pump: Global Opportunities for Reducing the Use of Leaded Gasoline*, with the support of UNICEF, and within the framework of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC), which is composed of UNEP, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), WHO, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In February 2000, UNEP and the OECD published another report entitled, *Phasing Lead out of Gasoline*, which further aims to help policy makers select the best options and programmes for reducing and eventually eliminating the use of lead in gasoline.
15. Significant headway is being made in inter-governmental negotiations, being carried out under the auspices of UNEP, to reach international agreement on a global treaty that aims to ban 12 Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). The 12 POPs, which are identified by the UNEP Governing Council, including DDT, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and dioxins, are considered among the most dangerous of all toxic chemicals, because they have been linked to an array of adverse health effects. POPs have been found even in Arctic species, thousands of miles from the source of the pollution. POPs persist for long periods and accumulate in living species, becoming more concentrated in fatty tissue as they move up the food chain and with time. These

toxic contaminants can then be passed on to the next generation through breast milk. As these POPs endanger human health and the environment from one generation to the next, countries are working to negotiate a treaty that can withstand the test of time, so as to secure the health of future generations and the integrity of the chain of life. Inter-governmental negotiations have reaffirmed the eventual elimination of the 12 POPs as the goal of the proposed treaty, and have stressed, subject to periodic review, the need to include public health exemptions, *inter alia*, for use of DDT in controlling malaria mosquitoes, as countries adopt alternative chemical and non-chemical strategies and reduce reliance on DDT. Intensive discussions have laid the basis for deciding on technical and financial assistance at the last round of negotiations, to be held in December 2000 in Johannesburg, South Africa. While a number of issues are outstanding, it is considered that negotiators are in a good position to reach agreement on the treaty by the end of 2000, the deadline mandated by UNEP's Governing Council.

16. UNEP is also undertaking a number of immediate actions against POPs in advance of the treaty, including co-operation with WHO and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in providing guidance on alternative strategies for sustainable pest and vector control. For example, in early 2000, UNEP, FAO and WHO sponsored a workshop for South-East Asian countries, which brought together officials from health, agriculture and environment agencies to discuss the problems caused by using pesticides such as DDT to control disease vectors and crop pests. In this manner, UNEP is able to act as a broker of ideas, bringing together three sectors to identify practical ways of improving crop yields and community health while reducing the use of pesticides, so as to achieve mutual benefits through cooperative strategies that are ecologically sustainable. For as the WSC Plan of Action underscores, improved child nutrition requires adequate household food security, and a healthy environment (paragraph 13). Natural resource degradation and pollution - dwindling forests, desertification, drought, flooding, salination, water-logging and soil eutrophication caused by improper pesticide and fertilizer use - all threaten food supplies, by making farming and sustained land use more difficult. When environmental degradation compromises food security, children are the most vulnerable. In this regard, UNEP, *inter alia*, works closely with FAO in the field of integrated land management, and is one of the four co-sponsoring UN agencies of the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).
17. In the field of the safe management of chemicals, progress has also been made with regard to the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, which was adopted in September 1998. The aim of the PIC procedure is to promote a shared responsibility between exporting and importing countries in protecting human health and the environment from the harmful effects of certain hazardous chemicals being traded internationally. The PIC Convention, for which UNEP and FAO provide the Interim Secretariat, will enter into force when 50 States have ratified it, which is expected in 2002. States that developed and reached agreement on the Rotterdam Convention did so in record time because of their clear concern for health and the

environment. For the same reason, they acknowledged that it is vital to start its operation immediately, implementing the Convention PIC procedure on a voluntary basis until it comes into effect. Chemicals and pesticides subject to the PIC procedure cannot be exported unless the importing country is made aware of their potential dangers and gives explicit consent, thereby protecting human health and the environment. The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) that negotiated the Convention will until the Convention enters into force, oversee the operation of the PIC procedure and prepare for the first Conference of the Parties (COP). In early 2000, the Interim Chemical Review Committee (ICRC) met to formulate recommendations to the INC to guide future action to implement the Convention, thereby offering greater safeguards for the well being of people living today and generations to come. Its purpose is to make recommendations on the inclusion of banned and severely restricted chemicals or severely hazardous pesticide formulations in the PIC procedure.

18. The international community also recently adopted Cartagena Biosafety Protocol to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). This is significant from an environmental health perspective as it is the first global treaty that reaffirms and operationalises the 'precautionary principle'. The Protocol outlines procedures to deal with issues arising from the transboundary movement, transit, handling and use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and commodities containing them, that may adversely affect the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity or pose risks to health and the environment. The precautionary principle is reflected in a provision which states that countries do not have to have complete scientific certainty to block imports of a GMO they fear could be harmful to biodiversity and, by extension, human health.
19. The WSC Plan of Action further addresses children in especially difficult circumstances (paragraph 22), such as orphans and street children, refugees or displaced persons, victims of war and natural and man-made disasters, including such perils as exposure to radiation and dangerous chemicals. In this regard, in 1994, UNEP and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies developed an environmental training manual, entitled *Youth Action for Life – Environmental Training Manual*. It provides practical information for young IRCRC members in preventing environmental disasters, as well as preparing and providing assistance during such disasters. UNEP has also undertaken a number of activities over the past years to help protect human health in environmental emergency situations, for example through the provision of technical expertise as part of UN assessment missions, often with the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS/Habitat). For example, in May 1999 a joint UNEP/UNCHS (Habitat) Balkans Task Force (BTF) was established to assess the environmental and human settlement consequences of the Balkans conflict. In its report, *The Kosovo Conflict: Consequences for the Environment and Human Settlements*, the BTF concluded that pollution detected at four environmental "hot spots" in Serbia is serious and poses a threat to human health. As such, a group of international scientific experts worked on detailed environmental clean-up feasibility studies, and conducted an analysis of

specific activities and technical requirements. UNEP has also been collaborating with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the field of environmental refugees. Most recently, UNEP, in close collaboration with UNCHS and UNHCR, has undertaken an assessment project on the environmental impact of refugees in Guinea, and a report has been submitted to the Secretary-General thereon.

20. UNEP has undertaken various other initiatives which aim to assist and highlight the plight of children in especially difficult circumstances, including providing a discussion paper and participating in an *International Workshop on Africa's Urban Poor Child: Towards African Child-Friendly Cities*, organised by UNICEF and UNCHS/Habitat in Accra, Ghana in March 1997. UNEP also co-sponsored a project entitled *Shootback: Photos by Kids from the Nairobi Slums*, which provided 31 children from the Mathare slum, aged 12 to 17, with plastic cameras with which they photographed their lives. These photographs were presented in a book, and exhibited around the world. Their poignant images bring to life the fundamental linkages between poverty and the environment, and attest to the enormous source of energy and creativity amongst the impoverished youth of the world, and their desire to lead a full and productive life in a healthy environment. UNEP is also working to address the poverty, population and environment linkages in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

#### **Activities related to children's environmental education and awareness**

21. As the WSC Plan of Action underscores, besides its intrinsic value for human development and improving the quality of life, progress in education and literacy can contribute significantly to improvements in maternal and child health, and to the protection of the environment and the promotion of sustainable development. Environmental education through informal and formal channels is an investment in children, serving to enhance their life skills, engender respect and appreciation for the natural world, thereby laying foundations for sustainability and enabling them to fulfil their responsibilities to future generations. Environmental education is thus an influential entry point for progress towards sustainable development, as children when empowered to participate can be dynamic forces for change in protecting the environment on which their future depends. They are often the most aware supporters of environmental thinking, as well as the most discerning critics, contributing in a unique manner, with energy and vision, to finding solutions. Through its *Children and Youth Programme*, UNEP works to advance their involvement in the protection of the environment, and reports regularly to its Governing Council on these activities. The following provides an overview of the major initiatives that UNEP has undertaken for and with children and youth over the past decade.
22. Since 1975, when UNEP and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) launched the *International Environmental Education Programme* (IEEP), the two organizations have promoted environmental education for all as a key to responsible citizenship and sustainable development. Between 1990 and 1995, within the framework of *IEEP* and the *Education for All* campaign, UNEP

provided support to environmental education for formal and secondary level school children in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. UNEP also undertakes a *Regional Environmental Action Learning (REAL)* programme in eco-schools in Sub-Saharan Africa. Currently, more than 700 schools in 17 African nations participate in this initiative, which promotes curricular environmental education activities directly relating to the needs of school children and the surrounding communities. REAL is highly action-oriented in order to bring about change to the environmental conditions at the local level, for example in the areas of solid waste reduction, collection, reuse, recycling and disposal; water quality assessment and supply, including the economical use of freshwater and water management. Experience has demonstrated that there is also potential in this project to help generate income, and thus reduce poverty.

23. As a result of the focus on children generated by the WSC, in 1990 UNEP undertook a series of activities to highlight the linkages between children and the environment in addition to the *1990 State of the Environment report* devoted to that topic. The theme of the 1990 World Environment Day (WED) was *Children and the Environment*, and an information kit was developed on this theme and distributed to Governments, NGOs, United Nations Information Centres (UNIC) and UNEP National Committees. WED was commemorated around the world, with the main celebrations held in Mexico City, where numerous activities were held with children, including an expedition and a national tree planting campaign.
24. Coinciding with the 1990 WED celebrations, UNEP and the World Organization of Scout Movement launched an environmental training manual entitled, *Scouting for the Environment*, which provided basic environmental information to Scout leaders and was distributed to groups worldwide. As a result, the 32<sup>nd</sup> World Conference of the Scouts Movement, held in Paris, France in 1990 devoted several workshops to the environment, for the 2000 delegates from 117 Scouts National Associations. Subsequently, in 1991, UNEP participated in the World Scouts Jamboree in Republic of Korea, which was attended by between 25,000 to 30,000 scout representatives from around the world, at which UNEP organised 10 environmental workshops on the implementation of the *Scouting for the Environment* manual.
25. With the assistance of UNEP, the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) also developed an environmental training manual, providing basic information to be used by their members. The manual, which was distributed to WAGGGS national associations in 112 countries, was also used for environmental workshops at the World Guides Conference that was held in Singapore in June 1990. Subsequently, in 1991, UNEP and WAGGGS developed a publication providing practical information on how Girl Guides and Scouts can help communities in coping with water problems.
26. In 1990, UNEP also appointed a Goodwill Ambassador for young people and the environment. The Goodwill Ambassador, polar adventurer Robert Swan, acted as a

role model for the young people and inspired them to be environmentally conscious during major UNEP events including WED and UNEP's Global Youth Forum.

27. UNEP works to ensure that children are involved in major UN and UNEP environment-related events, including WED, Earth Day, the Clean up the World Campaign, World Water Day and International Ozone Day. UNEP and its regional offices actively support schools and community groups to commemorate these days through seminars, workshops, lectures, clean up and tree planting activities, and ceremonies. For example, UNEP's Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean celebrated WED in 1997, with a ceremony held in Mexico, attended, *inter alia*, by the Presidents of Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and the Prime Minister of Belize, at which the environmental activities of children were recognised, and for WED in 1998, UNEP's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific collaborated with the Thai Environmental and Community Development Association (Magic Eyes) to produce an environmental video for children entitled, *For Life On Earth, Save Our Seas*.
28. UNEP places an emphasis on enhancing the environmental awareness of children and youth through the arts. Since 1992, UNEP has organised International Photographic Competitions, *Focus on Your World*, sponsored by Canon Inc., which has a junior category for children under 16 years old. UNEP has also encouraged children to give their perceptions of the environment through painting, organising an annual *International Children's Painting Competition on the Environment*, with Japan's Foundation for Global Peace and the Environment. Winning entries are used to develop environmental picture booklets, annual calendars, posters and exhibits. For example, the 1994 winning paintings were used to develop an *Environmental Picture Booklet for Children*, distributed to children's organizations, schools and UNIC worldwide. UNEP also regularly organises regional competitions for children for environmental writing, painting and posters, for example UNEP's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific worked with the Thai National Council for Child and Youth Development to organize a national environmental painting contest for under-privileged children.
29. Following UNCED and the adoption of Agenda 21 in 1992, UNEP, UNDP and UNICEF collaborated in supporting the NGO Peace Child International to develop *Rescue Mission Planet Earth – A Children's Edition of Agenda 21*. The book was designed, written and illustrated by over 5,000 children from over 100 countries worldwide. It has been translated into several national languages and is being used in some schools to teach children about Agenda 21 and sustainable development. The success of the publication inspired the creation of the *Rescue Mission Planet Earth Network*. Groups affiliated to the Network, carry out regular reviews on the implementation of Agenda 21 in their respective countries and provide feedback to sessions of the CSD. In 1994, a Latin American version was produced by UNEP's Regional Office, with Ediciones Larousse, S. A. de C. V.

30. UNEP has also worked with the Peace Child International, and in partnership with UNESCO and UNICEF, on youth component of its Global Environment Outlook (GEO) project, *GEO-for-Youth*. The main product of the project is *Pachamama: Our Earth – Our Future*, a book prepared concurrently with and on the basis of UNEP's *GEO-2000* report. Pachamama, meaning Mother Earth in Quechua, the indigenous language of Peru, describes the state of the world's environment and what action governments and young people are taking to address environmental issues. It is an inspiring collection of case studies, poems and drawings made for children, by children from all over the world. The production of the book was made possible by a grant from the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP). It is available in English and is being published into Danish, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, and Japanese. While the publisher Evans Brothers Ltd. continues its active search for national publishers on a global scale, editions in Chinese, Greek, Moldavian, Thai and Urdu are currently under negotiation.
31. There is also a *Pachamama* web-site: <http://www.unep.org/geo2000/pacha/>, containing case studies, artwork and poetry produced by young people for the *Pachamama* report. The web-site has an interactive component, *the ECOMIND Maze Game*, which tests the reader's knowledge of present and emerging global environmental issues presented in the report. A *GEO Reference CD-ROM* is also being developed to cross-link *Pachamama* to the relevant parts of the *GEO-2000* report. The CD-ROM will feature training, contact and funding information together with interactive learning components. There is also a *Pachamama Teachers Guide*, under development. The draft *Teachers Guide* is currently under review so as to include perspectives from different regions and to strengthen the link with *Pachamama* as the key resource for children. UNEP's Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean has also initiated a *GEO-for-Youth* report for the region entitled, *Mi Terra Mi Mundo – GEO-for-Youth for Latin America and the Caribbean*. It is targeted at young people aged 15-25 and will focus specifically on the Latin America and Caribbean sections of the *GEO-2000* report.
32. Between 1994 and 1995, UNEP conducted a global survey on children's views on the environment. Over 26,000 children (8 to 16 years old) from 72 countries gave their views on local and global environmental problems, including solutions. The purpose of the survey was to determine the level of environmental awareness among young people, provide information on the views of children on the environment to decision-makers, educators and researchers, and inform UNEP's activities and programmes for children. Nearly half of the children who participated in the survey considered pollution to be the most threatening environmental problem, and a large percentage considered the development of environmental programmes and reinforcing awareness campaigns as effective ways of addressing environmental issues. The results were presented in a publication entitled, *Our Environment through the Eyes of Children*.
33. UNEP has also convened a series of *International Children's Conferences on the Environment*, which has brought together hundreds of children (10 to 12 years old) to learn about and voice their concerns on environmental issues. The first conference

was held in Eastbourne, England, in 1995, the second in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1998, and the third in Eastbourne, England in 2000. Challenges on the environment are developed by participants and shared with governments, in order to remind them of the need to incorporate the views of children in the development of environmental policies. In 1995, the participants from South Africa presented the conference challenges to the South African President, whose government took some actions in implementing them, and in 1999 the government of the United Kingdom organised a children's parliament and the views of children are being incorporated in environmental policies. The Conference has become the main plank of UNEP's outreach to children.

34. At the Millennium International Children's Conference on the Environment, held in Eastbourne, United Kingdom in May 2000, nearly 800 children from 90 countries, shared experiences of environmental projects, and drafted a series of resolutions which challenged the Ministers to heed children's concerns on issues such as pollution, recycling and water management. Two youth representatives presented these resolutions to the inaugural session of the Global Ministerial Environment Forum (the sixth special session of UNEP's Governing Council), held in Malmö, Sweden in May 2000. They challenged over 100 Ministers of Environment at the opening session of the Forum to: enforce environmental laws, especially those concerning water and pollution; provide clean water to all within the next 10 years; make recycling fun and provide more recycling bins; and find environment-friendly alternatives to plastic bags by the year 2004. The Ministers promised to act on the challenges, so UNEP is following up with member countries on their implementation.
35. One of the main outcomes of the first International Children's Conference on the Environment was the creation of a UNEP children's environment network. Environmental information for children is regularly sent out to members of the network, which comprises over 1,500 schools and community groups in 120 countries. Since 1997, a biannual UNEP magazine, *Leave it to Us*, which is developed for and by children and is published in English, French and Spanish, has been widely. The magazine provides information on topical environmental issues and stories on children's environmental activities, and aims to inform and inspire children to be involved in environmental activities. Also as a result of the International Children's Conferences, national conferences are held in several countries to draw attention to the environmental activities of children. In some countries such as Australia, Kenya and Malaysia, national children's conferences have been held annually since 1995. Other countries, including Egypt, Iran, Japan, Ghana, Mexico, Brazil and Bahrain have held one or two national conferences under the auspices of the International Children's Conference.
36. UNEP also aims to empower youth to participate in environmental debate, decision-making and action programmes at local, national, regional and global levels. In 1992, during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), UNEP announced the establishment of a *Global 500 Youth Environmental Award* programme, to recognise outstanding environmental achievements by young people.

Since 1993, 43 young people and their organizations have received the award for their environmental efforts.

37. UNEP has also regularly convened its Global Youth Forum, bringing together young environmentalists to share views and learn about environmental issues. Between 1990 and 1994, the Forum was held for young people who developed declarations and statements of commitments, and became part of the global UNEP youth environment network. Since 1995, the Forum has shifted its focus to concentrate on young people aged 18 to 25. In 1995 the Global Youth Forum, held in Berkeley, California, United States, focussed on developing practical skills that could assist young people to become better organised and promote their involvement in environmental activities. In 1997 the Forum, which was held on Seoul, the Republic of Korea, developed an environmental plan of action to the year 2000 and beyond.
38. Currently, 12 regional youth advisors assist in formulating and implementing regional strategies and work programmes, and have helped to expand UNEP's youth work to cover over 1,500 groups worldwide, and promote youth involvement in environment-related events. For example, in 1999 in the Asia and the Pacific region, representatives from 23 countries developed a Youth Declaration and Regional Action Plan. In June 2000, youth leaders from Asia and the Pacific met at UNEP's Regional Office to examine environmental issues, share experiences and draft an appeal document. The appeal will be read to about 60 Environment Ministers at an opening session of the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, in September 2000 in Japan. The message will underscore the importance of involving youth in decision-making processes. The sub-regional leaders will be joined by youth from other Asia and Pacific countries for the Regional Youth Caucus in Japan, at which they will further develop the appeal to ministers and represent youth at meetings of NGOs.
39. UNEP has also worked to encourage youth to consider sustainable consumption issues, for example, in a book published in 1995 entitled, *Taking Action: A Guide for You and Your Community*. Furthermore, in February 1999, UNEP was given the task of developing a sustainable consumption strategy for youth in co-operation with the UNEP Youth Advisory Council (YAC) and the CSD. UNEP's *Youth and Sustainable Consumption Strategy* aims to investigate the role of youth in promoting sustainable consumption, engage a global process of consultation on this topic, and set up actions to promote sustainable consumption among youth. The strategy aims to combine the creativity and enthusiasm of the young with UNEP's experience in sustainability and multi-stakeholder networking, thereby empowering youth to have an active role in shaping a more sustainable future. In this regard, UNEP is coordinating research, with the help of the UNEP/YAC and other partners, in order to improve understanding of consumption drivers and attitudes of young people, and identify avenues to deliver sustainable consumption messages around the world.

## **II. Other Actions Undertaken by UNEP in the Implementation of the Plan of Action**

40. The aforementioned activities that UNEP is undertaking, with its partners, and under the guidance of its Governing Council, contribute to and support the achievement of the goals and strategies enunciated in WSC Declaration and Plan of Action. They have also served to foster and support the effective implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), as called for in its article 45.
41. UNEP's activities in the field of children's environmental health have served to promote the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health, as stated in article 24 of the CRC. States Parties to the CRC recognise and pledge to pursue the full implementation of this right, taking appropriate measures to combat disease and malnutrition, through, *inter alia*, the provision of adequate nutritious foods and clean drinking-water, taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution. This provision of the CRC reflects the fact that a sound environment is a vital cornerstone of human health, and that the right to the highest attainable standard of health is dependent on the provision of a healthy physical environment.
42. UNEP's activities in the field of environmental education and awareness-raising have contributed to the promotion of the right of the child to education, particularly in the context of article 29 of the CRC, by which States Parties agree that the education of the child shall, *inter alia*, be directed to, the development of respect for the natural environment. Within the task force on education of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) in Kenya, UNEP, in collaboration with the UNICEF country office, the UNESCO Regional Office for Africa, the National UNESCO Committee of Kenya, and other UN bodies, has helped to promote educational activities for the girl child and children that have dropped out of school.

## **III. Consideration for Future Action: UNEP's perspective**

43. In assessing, from the environment perspective, the implementation and results of the WSC Declaration and Plan of Action during the 1990s, and in this context considering future action, it is essential to fully take into account emerging environmental trends, issues and challenges that impact the needs and rights of children and women. Therefore, in working towards the mutually reinforcing goals of meeting the needs and rights of children and managing the environmental challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the international community will, on the one hand, need to continue to build a web of safeguards to protect the environment and human health, and on the other hand, continue to lay the foundations of a sustainable future by educating and empowering its children to participate in protecting the environment on which their future depends.

44. Environment Ministers attending the first Global Ministerial Environment Forum underscored in their *Malmö Declaration*, the need to manage the environment so as to promote sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations. They stressed that the root causes of global environmental degradation are embedded in social and economic problems such as pervasive poverty, unsustainable production and consumption patterns, inequity in distribution of wealth, and the debt burden, and that success in combating environmental degradation is dependent on the full participation of all actors in society, and an aware and educated population. In this context, they underscored the need to intensify efforts in developing preventive action and a concerted response, including awareness-raising and education, and that Governments should promote conditions to facilitate the ability of all parts of society to have a voice and to play an active role in creating a sustainable future. They concluded by outlining their belief that the emergence of a younger generation with a clear sense of optimism, solidarity and values, and women increasingly aware and with an enhanced and active role in society, point to the emergence of a new consciousness, needed to ensure a sustainable future.
45. In this regard, more consolidated efforts are required on the part of the UN system, in collaboration with Governments, civil society and the private sector to prepare the younger generation and provide environmental education. In-service teacher training has been identified as an urgent need, in order to integrate environmental education into substantive curricula fields such as, home sciences, agriculture, art and crafts, natural sciences, and languages. Training needs assessments among teachers conducted by UNEP, UNESCO, UNICEF and other partners demonstrate the demand for awareness raising and knowledge dissemination on environmental issues. If the international community wants to increase the environmental consciousness of the leaders of tomorrow, their teachers of today also need to be educated. This will require the development of state-of-the-art pro-active learning and teaching tools.
46. In the field of children's environmental health, it is important to re-emphasize that child health depends at least as much on the control of root environmental causes of poor health as on clinical responses to disease. As Agenda 21 states, "the linkage of health, environmental and socio-economic improvements requires intersectoral efforts... particularly relevant are the inclusion of prevention programmes rather than relying solely on remediation and treatment". Agenda 21 goes on to assert that, "Many important communicable diseases remain for which environmental control measures are indispensable." Thus, measures to improve the environment may be considered among the most fundamental steps in preventing child illness and as vital to the attainment of child and maternal health goals.
47. In this context, it is clear that progress can only be made if the international community - the UN system, the non-governmental community and the private sector - strives together to foster intersectoral cooperation at the local, national, regional and international levels to promote environmental health. With the unprecedented pace of development underway throughout much of the world, the international community must seize opportunities to reduce environmental risks, save resources, and protect

public health, so as to lift the unacceptably high - and often preventable – environmental health burden, and move towards a development that is truly sustainable. In this regard, all sectors of society need to share knowledge, and work together to find solutions that create healthier environments. There is a need to harness the latest scientific findings on a wide range of environmental factors affecting the health of children, ranging from air pollution to endocrine disruptors, from pesticides in food to contaminants in play areas, thereby identifying obstacles, challenges, information gaps, and accordingly formulate policies and strategies to help improve the quality of the environment, and thus child health.

48. In the area of children’s environmental health, and environmental education and awareness raising UNEP and UNICEF should continue to enhance their collaborative activities, within the framework of their MoU, in order to promote the interlinkages between children and the environment.