



United Nations Environment Programme

برنامج الأمم المتحدة للبيئة • 联合国环境规划署
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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Dear EMG Colleagues,

Today is World Environment Day. An excellent day to write to you in order to inform you of progress since I took on the position, three months ago today, of the Director of the secretariat of the Environment Management Group.

During these months I have met many of you and through the conversations we had, a picture has emerged of what the EMG should and should not do, as well as of how it should operate. These discussions have led to the organization of the informal, brainstorming meeting on 8 May in New York, held on the margins of the CSD. This event was well attended, and based on the feedback received, I can say was very successful. A short summary of what happened at that meeting, as well as some other related information is attached to this letter.

I would like to call your attention to paragraph 5 of that summary in particular, which contains the agreement by the participants that the EMG should initially focus its efforts on making the UN Carbon/Climate-Neutral on the one hand, and on Green Procurement in the UN on the other. You may recall that the latter is already on the agenda of the EMG, and in fact after some useful background work by UNEP's DTIE (Paris), we are ready for moving this activity forward. On the other hand, while there have been requests in the past from the UN Secretary-General's Policy Committee for the EMG to get engaged in carbon neutrality, this would be a new project for 2007. I trust that through this letter, as well as the accompanying information on the 8 May event, the whole EMG is now able to share the consensus that emerged concerning the immediate work programme for the remainder of 2007.

Of course, there are many other potential EMG issues that have been raised – both at the 8 May meeting, and also in my bilateral discussions with you. We will be continuing discussions with the interested parties to formulate these as possible issue management projects, and once we have something concrete, we will bring those to the attention of the whole EMG.

Today was also the day when the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced his intention to “Green the United Nations”, by moving the organization toward climate neutrality, and by developing green procurement and other sustainable management practices. The Secretary-General also called on our executive heads to support him in this endeavor to lead by example. Furthermore, he will be asking the EMG to provide him the support needed to implement his vision. It is reassuring that what he is asking us to deliver (top-down) is the same as what we have agreed to develop at the informal brainstorming meeting (bottom-up).

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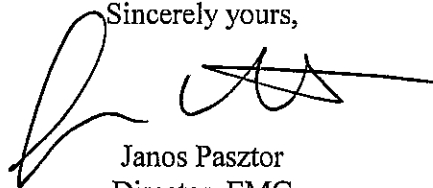
The intention now is to go ahead with full steam to frame and then implement the two issue management projects: "C-Neutral" and "Green Procurement". For this, there will be a working meeting of the two issue management groups (IMGs) working on these issues back-to-back in Washington D.C. at the end of June. While many EMG members will be interested in the outcome of these two IMGs, only some of you will be interested in contributing to the actual work of the groups themselves. So far the World Bank, UNEP, UNFCCC, WMO, ILO, IPCC, UN-DM and UN-DESA have expressed interest in one or both of these IMGs. If there are additional EMG members interested in participating in these two IMGs, or if you know other organizations (including NGOs, and private sector) who may need to be engaged, please let me know, or contact directly Mr. Hossein Fadaei (hossein.fadaei@unep.ch, cc. emg@unep.ch), who is coordinating the various IMGs.

My expectation is that in the next 2-3 months we could advance a great deal on both of these issues, with the objective of preparing for a high-level policy decision on these matters by the Secretary-General, and by our executive heads. In this context, it would be useful to have the first, formal meeting of the EMG this year to be convened some time in September, or possibly early October. At that meeting we could review progress achieved in the two issue management groups, and decide on the continued work programme to take us well into next year. At that meeting it would also be useful to revise the EMG's existing terms of reference. We will soon identify a suitable date for this meeting, following consultations with all of you, and then send you a formal invitation.

In addition to working hard on the two established issue management projects, we will now continue discussions with interested colleagues on the other ideas expressed. We will also use the following 3-4 months to improve the support infrastructure for the work of the EMG. We now have a core budget provided by UNEP, and I have started the process of raising additional support from governments. We still need to make some revisions to our website, and to allow improved communications between us, such as through the installation of listservs and web-based collaborative software. I will be reporting on these issues later in more detail.

The last few months in office have given me lots of encouragement that that this will be a highly successful year for the EMG. I look forward to working with you to making this happen.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Janos Pasztor', written over a horizontal line.

Janos Pasztor
Director, EMG

Annex: Summary outcomes of the 8 May meeting, and related documentation