United Nations Environment Management Group
Forum on the UN Reform Initiatives
Palais des Nations
Geneva, 3 – 4 July 2006

EMG Forum on UN Reform Initiatives
Segment of Senior Officials / EMG Focal points
Geneva, 3 July 2006

Co-Chairs Summary and Conclusions

I Introduction:

The Need for coordination within the international environmental agenda was accorded a high degree of attention by the worl leaders at the historic summit in NY , in Septemeber 2005. The Outcome document of the summit made specific recommendations with regard to United Nations system-wide coherence, based on the recognition that the United Nations brings together a unique wealth of expertise and resources. The Outcome points to the extensive experience and expertise of the various development-related organizations, agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system in their diverse and complementary fields of activity and their important contributions to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the other development objectives established by various United Nations conferences.

The Outcome stipulates the need for stronger system-wide policy coherence by strengthening linkages between the United Nations' normative work and its operational activities and the need to ensure that the main horizontal policy themes, such as sustainable development, (particularly its social, economic and environmental aspects) are taken into account in decision-making throughout the United Nations. The Outcome specifically invites the Secretary-General to "launch work to further strengthen the management and coordination of United Nations operational activities",[1] (General Assembly 60/1, Para 169) calling for such work to be focused on ensuring the United Nations maximizes its contribution to achieving internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals and proposals for "more tightly managed entities" in the fields of the environment, humanitarian assistance and development.

The document goes on to make specific recommendations with regard to environmental activities "Recognizing the need for more efficient environmental activities in the United Nations system, with enhanced coordination, improved policy advice and guidance, strengthened scientific knowledge, assessment and cooperation, better treaty compliance, while respecting the legal autonomy of the treaties, and better integration of environmental activities in the broader sustainable development framework at the operational level, including through capacity-building . . . .".

World leaders agreed to explore the possibility of a more coherent institutional framework to address this need, including a more integrated structure building on existing institutions and internationally agreed instruments, as well as the treaty bodies and the specialized agencies. The General Assembly has also launched informal consultations on the institutional framework on environment in early 2006. The UN Secretary General's High-level Panel is undertaking a new study on System wide coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment.

These reform initiatives naturally have a direct bearing on the future of the Environmental Management Group. The outcome of the Secretary-General's high-level panel's study will certainly have implications for the role and mandate of the EMG and its links with other United Nations coordinating mechanisms. The task

1 General Assembly resolution 60/1, para. 169.

entrusted to the Panel is also an important opportunity for the Group, presenting the possibility for its members to present the panel with a set of coordinated observations and recommendations with regard to enhancing system-wide coherence in the field of the environment.

In his letter, dated 1 March 2006, to Mr Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General, the Chairman of the EMG wrote to brief the SG on the measures being taken by the United agencies and the secretariat of the multilateral of ea to reinvigorate the EMG . In that communication Dr. Topfer also confirmed the commitment of EMG to facilitating support for ad contributions to the United Nations reform initiatives. The EMG forum on the UN Reform Initiatives was convened in Geneva, 3-4 July, in the margins of the High level Segment of ECOSOC to facilitate a contribution, which would fully reflect the perspectives and views of the Group's members.

The Forum provided an opportunity for members to present their views and perspectives on the core issues at the centre of the UN reform initiatives. The Forum consisted of two segments i.e: a meeting of senior officials and EMG focal points which was co-chaired by WHO, UNESCO and UNFCCC. This was followed on 4 July, by a meeting of Heads of Agencies and Executives Secretariats of Multilateral Agreements (MEAs) on 4 July to consider and approve the EMG's contribution to the UN Reform Initiatives. The Forum was attended by A Heads of Agencies/Executive Heads of MEAs , B Deputy Heads of Agencies/Deputy Executive Secretaries of MEAs, C Directors, D Senior Officials and E representatives of various institutions. The Forum benefited from 3 presentations by professors Adil Najam and Maria Ivanova as well as Mr. Paul Lolo who highlighted a sample of views and perspectives of the G77 and China.

The EMG's contribution draws on the views and perspectives presented at the Forum and takes into account the outcome of the EMG high level Forum in Geneva January 2006.

II. Key questions and issues highlighted by the Chair in his Issues Paper and the Co-Chairs in their conduct of their deliberation at the Forum:

1) Integrating environment in UN development policy and decision-making

a) What is the best way to manage environment in the United Nations system country operations?

b) How can linkages between normative and operational activities within the United Nations be strengthened?

c) How can the role of the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the participation of non-resident agencies be enhanced?

d) What are the challenges and constraints regarding the mainstreaming of environment in development decision-making?

2) Achieving UN system wide Coherence on environmental policy

a) Can United Nations system-wide coherence on environmental policy be achieved in the absence of a system-wide policy on environment?

b) What could be the main elements of a system-wide policy on environment?

c) How could a system-wide policy on environment be developed and approved?

d) How could a system-wide policy on environment be implemented and monitored?

e) How could policy advice and guidance on new and emerging environmental issues be improved?

3) Strengthening UN institutional framework on Environment

a) "What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current institutional framework within which normative and analytical aspects of the [United Nations'] work in the field of environment are undertaken, including with regard to work undertaken under the auspices of multilateral environmental agreements?

b) How could the [United Nations] develop a stronger scientific and analytical capacity in monitoring, assessing and reporting on critical environmental trends?

c) How could the [United Nations] system ensure that global issues are adequately and adeptly addressed by the [United Nations] system (i.e. climate change)?

d) What could constitute an effective institutional framework for the [United Nations] system's environmental activities, at the country, regional and global levels?"

e) How can largely independent agencies which have their own intergovernmental bodies and budgets be coordinated without in the absence of either a carrot or a stick.

4) Reinforcing UN and the International legal framework on environment

a) How could the United Nations best provide more comprehensive and coherent management and monitoring of the implementation of the growing range of multilateral environmental agreements?

b) How can compliance with and implementation of multilateral environmental agreements be improved?

5) Improving UN assessment and reporting on environmental issues and trends

a) How can data collection, assessment and reporting on environmental issues and trends in the United Nations system be improved and harmonized?

6) Expanding UN system-wide cooperation on Environment

a) How can cooperation on United Nations system-wide environmental goals at the global level be expanded?

b) How can cooperation on system-wide environmental goals at the regional level be expanded?

c) How can cooperation on system-wide environmental goals at the country level be expanded?

d) How can adequate and reliable financial support for Environment Management Group staffing and activities be ensured?

Material TO BE INSERTED

III. Elements for an EMG contribution

Insert introductory para

Views and perspectives:

To be effective, the overall United Nations reform efforts to achieve greater policy coherence and operational effectiveness in the United Nations system need to be initiated and driven from the top, both politically by the United Nations Member States through the General Assembly and managerially by the heads of all key United Nations bodies and agencies through the Chief Executives Board. That high-level reform process is now well underway.
On environment, however, links to the top United Nations political and managerial bodies have historically been weak or missing. The new reform process recognizes the need to remedy that weakness by focusing on environment as one of the three key priority areas and pillars for improving United Nations effectiveness, coherence and performance.

As part of the renewed reform process, the Environment Management Group can and must play a major role in providing leadership, advice and assistance in, for example, at least two critical policy areas identified earlier in the present note: ensuring greater United Nations policy coherence by developing and implementing a system-wide policy on environment; and ensuring greater United Nations effectiveness and performance by focusing on "the forgotten imperative for sustainable development" and integrating environment in decision-making at all levels throughout the United Nations system. As both policy issues need and deserve high-level attention, they could both be addressed at a special session during the biannual meetings of the Chief Executives Board which, to highlight and reinforce the high-level attention and link on environment, could meet in special session as the Environment Management Group.

The UN GA Process

The role of the EMG in:

A. Enhanced coordination
B. Improve policy advice and guidance
C. Better treaty compliance while respecting legal autonomy of MEAs.
D. Better integration of environmental activities in the broader development framework at the operational level
E. Capacity building, linkages between normative work and the operational activities
F. Exploring a more coherent environmental institutional framework within the UN system
G. Improving UN assessment and reporting on environmental issues and trends
H. Expanding UN system wide cooperation on environment

IV The way forward

Chair's communication to the UN GA president and the Coherence Panel
To the SG
To the Executive Heads and Secretaries of MEAs , Governing bodies of agencies
Refer to Curitiba Specking points