The United Nations System

Environmental Management Group

Report of the Tenth Session of the Environmental Management Group (EMG)
8 February 2005, Geneva, Switzerland

A. Opening of the meeting

1. The Tenth Session of the Environmental Management Group (EMG) was held in Geneva on 8 February 2005. On behalf of Dr. Klaus Töpfer, the Executive Director of UNEP, Ms Monika Linn, the Head of the EMG Secretariat, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants.

2. In her introductory remarks, the Chair informed the Group that the aim of the meeting was to discuss the work programme of the EMG in 2005, particularly the future role and the continuation of the EMG's work in the area of environmental capacity building, as well as the EMG's contribution to the 14th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) in 2006.

3. The list of participants is contained in annex 1 to the present report.

B. Adoption of the Agenda

4. The meeting adopted the following agenda:

    1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda
    2. The EMG's programme of work for 2005

        a. The work of the EMG in the area of enhancing UN system wide information exchange on environmental capacity building

        b. Contribution of the EMG to the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)

    3. Date and agenda for the next meeting
    4. Any other business
    5. Closure of the meeting

2. The EMG's programme of work for 2005

A. The work of the EMG in the area of enhancing UN system wide information exchange on environmental capacity building

5. The Chair informed the Group on the status of the EMG's work in the area of environmental capacity building following the completion of the two studies on capacity building for biological diversity and chemicals management. A third study on the existing UN system information exchange and other cooperative frameworks on environmental capacity building had been prepared and made available to the EMG members. As a basis for the discussion of the next steps, the Secretariat had prepared a note, which summarised the findings of the above studies on the possible role of the EMG, including options for establishing a resource library or clearinghouse on environmental capacity building.

6. The EMG Secretariat was then invited to present the above note entitled " The UN System Information Exchange on Environmental Capacity Building and the Role of the Environmental Management Group".

7. The Secretariat explained that the note had been prepared to provide an *overview* of the status of the EMG's work in the area of environmental capacity building and the results achieved so far. It contained the following suggestions, which were derived from the above studies and were proposed for the consideration of the Group on the possible role of the EMG in enhancing information exchange on environmental capacity building:

    - *The EMG could establish a clearinghouse on the UN system's existing environmental capacity building activities and the areas of low and high concentration. This database could also provide information on capacity building activities and the existing cooperative frameworks in cross-cutting areas, with the objective to promote horizontal cooperation across the UN system.*

    - *Whereas the existing sector-specific cooperative frameworks were often limited in membership, the broad and diverse membership of the EMG would facilitate an enhanced information exchange.*

    - *The EMG could gather and distribute information and knowledge on the UN system experiences and best practices on environmental capacity building. It could promote such knowledge across the UN system.*

    - *The EMG could contribute to the effective implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan on Technology Support and Capacity Building by soliciting and disseminating information on the UN system's work in the area of environmental capacity building.*

8. The EMG Secretariat furthermore made a PowerPoint presentation on the possible design and features of a clearinghouse that could be developed by the EMG.

9. In order to provide a working model of an information exchange clearing house, the Chair then invited a representative of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) to make a presentation on the establishment and the functioning of the joint UNECE/WHO clearing house on the Transport, Health and Environment, Pan European Program (PEP). In his presentation, the UNECE representative referred to the scope, structure and features of the PEP clearinghouse, as well as to the challenges in establishing and maintaining it.

10. The Chair then invited the members to provide their ideas and comments on the proposed options and the role of the EMG

11. The representative of the Ramsar Convention, while referring to the usefulness of an EMG clearinghouse, expressed his concern about the required financial and human resources. He observed that such a clearinghouse did not need to be as sophisticated as the PEP clearinghouse, and that it should rather be built in a simple and cost effective manner that could enable the members to download the needed information.

12. The representative of UNDP, while stressing the role of the EMG in enhancing UN system cooperation, underlined that any possible EMG network should not attempt to analyze or assess the work of the UN agencies. Concurring with other EMG members on the financial and personnel requirements for a clearinghouse, she added that the EMG should narrow down the scope of its proposed clearinghouse. She suggested that the database could initially showcase the UN system experiences and best practices in relation to specific environmental aspects of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and gradually broaden its scope.

13. The representative of the World Bank highlighted the cost of establishing a clearinghouse and requested the Secretariat to provide detailed information on the structure, the required resources and UNEP's contribution in both the short and long term. Alternatively, he suggested establishing a simple 'link library' with hyperlinks to EMG members' websites.

14. The representative of the WMO stressed that any type of resource library or clearinghouse should observe limits in terms of exhibiting the work of the agencies in the area of capacity building. He therefore underlined that there should not be an attempt to judge or assess the work of the agencies. Instead the focus should be a simple presentation of the activities in specific areas. He then suggested that the Group might start with a pilot phase to develop a portal type of database to simply showcase the agencies' activities.

15. The representative of the ILO also underlined the lack of adequate resources for establishing a sophisticated clearinghouse. He supported the establishment of a limited

website which would provide reliable information and could advertise the work and the products of the agencies in the area of environmental capacity building. He also underlined the limited access to the internet in some parts of Africa and Asia, as well as the necessity to provide information materials people could understand and use.

16. The representative of UNITAR pointed out that the issue of information exchange was a difficult challenge, particularly at the sectoral level. In drawing attention to the annotated agenda and background note, he stated that in his view some of the general conclusions reached in both papers could not be derived from the study on chemicals management capacity building. For example, the chemicals study did not conclude that "the inter-sectoral cooperative frameworks on capacity building are sparse". Rather it referred to the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) as a mechanism of nine international organizations to coordinate their chemicals management capacity building activities.

17. He suggested that the EMG could, as a first step, set up a simple portal with links to the agencies' overall programmes on environmental capacity building and the surveys prepared by the Secretariat. He stated that the idea of establishing a database was not realistic given the limited resources of the EMG and the huge amount of existing information. He said that since the two existing surveys in the areas of biological diversity and chemicals management did not go into the agencies' specific activities and were just limited to the agencies' institutional structure and programmes, they could be complemented by additional surveys covering the agencies' specific activities. He suggested furthermore that in addition to biological diversity and chemicals management, the EMG could prepare similar studies on other sectors and make those available in its portal for the information of its members.

18. The representative if the WHO-UNEP Health and Environment Linkages Initiative (HELI) proposed that instead of setting up a clearinghouse the EMG might consider preparing a "state of the UN work on environmental capacity building report", for the information of the governments and the agencies, on an annual basis.

19. The representative of UNEP Earthwatch referred to the practical difficulties of internet applications as far as the experiences of Earthwatch were concerned. He stressed that the Secretariat should benefit from the PEP's experiences and undertake a feasibility study, taking into account the existing websites and portals so as to add value to their work and not to duplicate them.

20. The representative of UNDESA, while expressing similar concerns on the budgetary and human resource requirements, concurred with the idea of developing a "state of capacity building report" to be considered as an alternative task for the EMG. He however mentioned that the focus of such a report should not be just environmental capacity building, given that the annual report on environmental capacity building would be prepared by UNEP as part of the implementation of the Bali Plan. It therefore could focus on environmental activities and projects in a general manner.

21. In her concluding remarks on this agenda item, the Chair highlighted again that the first objective of a resource library or clearinghouse was to enhance cooperation among the agencies, which would consequently be supported by the Governments. She observed that the agencies could cooperate effectively only when they knew what the others were doing. The EMG Secretariat had been trying to narrow down the focus of its work so as to be as useful as possible in enhancing interagency cooperation. Some governments had expressed their support and interest for establishing an EMG database on environmental capacity building and they would possibly consider providing funds for this purpose. She concluded that as there was no consensus to proceed with a sophisticated clearing house, and on the basis of the Group's discussion, the EMG Secretariat could take the first step and develop a portal with hyperlinks to the agencies' information sources.

B. Contribution of the EMG to the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)

22. The Chair informed the meeting that in the context of preparations for the 2006/2007 cycle of the CSD's multi-year programme of work, the EMG had been invited by the CSD Secretariat/UNDESA to work on the issues of "air pollution/atmosphere", including indoor air pollution, and industrial development, with a focus on local and global emissions. She then invited the representative of UNDESA to inform the Group on the CSD's programme of work and further details on the expected contribution from the EMG.

23. The representative of UNDESA elaborated on the CSD Secretariat's preparations for the implementation of the CSD's multi-year programme of work. The CSD's multi-year work programme, which had been adopted at the eleventh session of the Commission, was composed of seven two-year cycles. The first year of a cycle was devoted to reviewing the progress made in implementing sustainable development goals and identifying obstacles and constraints in the areas under consideration. The second year would decide on measures to speed up implementation and mobilize action to overcome these obstacles and constraints. The thematic issues of energy, industrial development, air pollution and climate change had been chosen for consideration in the second cycle (2006/2007).

24. Among the above issues, the CSD Secretariat had proposed the that two issues of "Air pollution /Atmosphere" and "Industrial Development" be considered by the EMG in order to provide an integrated contribution from the EMG members in terms of their experiences, lessons learned and best practices on specific environmental aspects of those issues. He suggested that an IMG could be established for this purpose, as there was no other existing interagency mechanism for the consideration of the two issues. The results of the IMG's work would be presented to the CSD 14 in a formal manner, though it would not constitute a part of the Secretary General's Report.

25. The representative of the ILO expressed the interest and readiness of his organization to participate in such a process, in particular in the areas of major hazard control. He

observed that such an effort would help the ILO in motivating the countries to ratify the ILO Conventions in the areas of hazard control. In the absence of a WHO representative, he suggested that the WHO might also be interested in participating in this exercise given their programmes in the area of indoor air pollution.

26. The representative of the UNECE, while referring to the role of the UNECE in contributing to the SG's Reports to the CSD, requested further clarification on the particular profile of the EMG's input. He observed that it might be frustrating for EMG members to invest time and resources to provide the requested contribution if this contribution did not receive appropriate visibility in the CSD session.

27. The representative of the World Bank also requested further clarification on the demand for such a contribution and the way it would be used and integrated into the CSD process.

28. The representative of the WMO provided information on the work of his organization on atmosphere and air pollution and underlined the WMO's enormous work and experience in those areas in the context of the WMO's Global Atmosphere Watch Programme.

29. In responding to the questions on the nature and the presentation of the EMG's input, the representative of UNDESA stressed that any contribution made by the EMG would first and foremost depend on the willingness of its members. UNDESA had come up with this proposal in a cooperative spirit and with a view to involving the EMG in the preparations for the CSD and benefiting from the role and added value of the EMG. He added that at this stage the CSD Secretariat would not be able to determine how exactly the EMG's contribution would be fed into the CSD process, as this was the prerogative of the Bureau of CSD 14.

30. While the "scoping papers", which were prepared by the CSD Secretariat and would be sent to the agencies for soliciting their information would feed into the SG's Report, the EMG's contribution could be focused on case studies and lessons learned in an integrated manner. Such input could, for example, be presented to the CSD in the form of a panel discussion so that it could be reflected in the outcome of the CSD meeting.

31. The demand for such a contribution came from the CSD Secretariat and not from governments. The CSD Secretariat had the task and the prerogative to undertake every possible effort for a good preparation of the CSD sessions, and would be pleased to cooperate with the EMG. He reminded the meeting of the need to draw a time line and to establish a work programme for the work of the IMG if the Group so decided.

32. The representative of the Ramsar Convention called the proposal a welcome invitation extended to the EMG for the first time from one of its members. He stressed however that any EMG input to the CSD needed to be considered in a formal manner and as part of the CSD official documentation. As such this would indeed be an effort in strengthening the role and the presence of the EMG in the international processes.

33. The Chair, while thanking UNDESA for their initiative, observed the interest shown by the members with regard to the possible role and contribution of the EMG and expressed the EMG Secretariat's readiness to assist in preparing such a contribution. She pointed out that it should be further clarified how such input would be integrated into the CSD process. She concluded that more informal discussion would be needed to clearly define the input, the way it would be integrated into the CSD discussions and the time lines for the work of a possible IMG. She therefore suggested further consultations with the CSD Secretariat as well as with other interested members of the Group through electronic means before establishing an IMG.

3. Date and agenda for the next meeting

34. The Chair suggested that the EMG Secretariat would communicate with members on the possible dates for the next meeting of the Group after the UNEPGC/GMEF Session (Nairobi, 21-25 February 2005).

4. Other business

35. The Chair briefed the meeting on the agenda for the 23rd session of the UNEP GC/GMEF, including the report prepared by an independent consultant on the comprehensive assessment of the location of the EMG Secretariat. She also informed the Group on UNESCO's proposal to put the "Decade of Education for Sustainable Development" on the agenda of the next EMG meeting and to prepare a working document for discussion. The Group supported this proposal.

5. Closure of the meeting

36. The Chair thanked the participants for their attendance and their useful contributions and declared the meeting closed.

ANNEX I

List of Participants

10th Meeting of the Environmental Management Group,
08 February 2005

Name	Organization
Monika LINN	EMG Secretariat (Chair)
Nelson SABOGAL	Basel Convention
Jukka TAKALA	International Labour Organization (ILO)
Peter BRIDGEWATER	Ramsar Convention
Pierre QUIBLIER	UNEP/HELI
Jaap VAN WOERDEN	UNEP/UN Earthwatch
Edward HOEKSTRA	United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
Nuria CASTELLS	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
Mohammad Reza SALAMAT	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)
Mahenau AGHA	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
Kaj BÄRLUND	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)
Martin MAGOLD	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)
Achim HALPAAP	United Nations Institute for Training & Research (UNITAR)
Kristine NILSEN	United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
Akhilesh MATHUR	Universal Postal Union (UPU)
Joseph INGRAM	World Bank
Annette PRÜSS-ÜSTÜN	World Health Organization (WHO)
Caifang WANG	World Meteorological Organization (WMO)
Yinka ADEBAYO	World Meteorological Organization (WMO)
Hossein Fadaei	EMG Secretariat
Florian Mersmann	EMG Intern