Environmental Management Group **23 November 2004**

Report of the Ninth Session of the Environmental Management Group (EMG) 8 November 2004, Geneva, Switzerland

A. Opening of the meeting

1. The Ninth Session of the Environmental Management Group (EMG) was held in Geneva on 8 November 2004. The meeting took place back to back with the first meeting of the Issue Management Group (IMG) on capacity building to provide a contribution to the High-level Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on an Intergovernmental Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building (IGSP). 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 briefed the members on the status of the EMG's work in the area of environmental capacity building. She underlined that the main objective of the meeting was to discuss the continuation of the EMG's work in the area of capacity building, in particular the preparation of the study on "enhancing the UN system information exchange, experiences and lessons learned in the area of environmental capacity building". She added that the Group would also consider and discuss the EMG's report to the twenty-third session of the UNEP Governing Council, including its medium term strategy and program of work for 2005.

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 work of the EMG on enhancing UN system wide coordination, information exchange, experiences and lessons learned in the area of environmental capacity building

3. The Report of the EMG to the UNEP Governing Council, including its medium term strategy and program of work for 2005

4. Any other business

5. Date and agenda for the next meeting

6. Closure of the meeting

C. The work of the EMG on enhancing UN system wide coordination, information exchange, experiences and lessons learned in the area of environmental capacity building

5. The Chair informed the meeting on the work of the EMG secretariat in the finalization of the two surveys on "situation/needs analysis in the area of environmental capacity building for biodiversity and chemicals management". The two surveys were further developed and revised taking into account the views and the additional information received from the Group's members. In their present form, the surveys had a more harmonized approach and structure and demonstrated, to the extent possible, the horizontal linkages as well as the possible areas of cooperation. Both surveys after being commented on and endorsed by the IMG through electronic means were submitted to the UNEP Secretariat for advance distribution to the third session of the IGSP in Bali.

6. On continuation of the Group's work in the area of environmental capacity building, the chair referred to the decision of the last EMG meeting, which requested the Secretariat to prepare a supplementary study on the UN system's existing information sharing mechanisms in the area of capacity building. The work for the preparation of the study had started and a consultant had been hired to prepare the paper. The paper entitled, "enhancing the UN System wide information exchange, experiences and lessons learned in environmental capacity building" would identify the existing information exchange mechanisms, possible needs and gaps in this area and would propose possibilities for further interagency cooperation through strengthening or establishing effective cooperative frameworks, taking into account the role of the EMG.

7. She then invited the EMG consultant to make a presentation on the status of the study, the achieved results and the follow up activities.

8. The consultant made a presentation on the approach, content and the findings of her study, which resulted from her interviews and meetings with a number of EMG members. She underlined that the output of the study would be an overviewing picture of institutional information sharing mechanisms related to environmental capacity building and the member's level of satisfaction with current practices. The study would also aim to provide EMG members with a series of options based on the information sharing mechanisms and tools that were being effectively employed and to highlight the possibility for further inter-agency cooperation through strengthening/establishing cooperative frameworks.

9. The study in its first part included a survey of the existing UN system information exchange mechanisms supporting environmental capacity building. The findings revealed that the prevalent type of information sharing mechanisms fell under the following broad categories:

- Global institutions and programmes
- Institutional partnerships and joint cooperation
- Networking, thematic portals and specialized search facilities.
- Workshops, training and international conferences
- UN inter-agency initiatives on MDGs in the context of environmental capacity building
- Clearing houses
- Digital libraries

10. In addressing the challenges, gaps and lessons learned in information sharing among UN agencies and MEAs, she underlined that the information collected from the EMG members showed that there were a variety of successful informal and formal mechanisms and tools that could also be further enhanced through employing an overarching system-wide strategy on information sharing. Lack of a common definition on environmental capacity building, sustainability of interventions and the need for inter-agency work on performance indicators were the main concerns identified through the meetings and interviews.

11. She highlighted that many EMG members were seeking support for identifying '*synergies*' as it was an issue of paramount concern. At the global level, for example, there was a demand for inter-agency information services related to synergy development. Also, it had been found that institutions had their own definitions of *synergies.*

12. The results of the interviews showed that in general, the EMG members supported the need for more inter-agency work on '*strategic*' level cooperation possibly through the EMG in areas such as information sharing on environmental capacity building. The work ahead, therefore, should concentrate on developing synergies by addressing the barriers to it.

13. Based on the research, the absence of incentives for sharing information on environmental capacity building were evident. At the global level, information tended to be shared externally based on the institutions' desire to demonstrate their good practices rather than for the purpose of seeking cooperation based on an inter-agency strategy.

14. She added that further consideration of *incentives* that motivated the agencies to enhance information sharing and cooperation was needed. The '*demand'* for information sharing should be based on the agencies *'use'* or '*benefi*t' of inter-agency information sharing and cooperation. Based on the research, a new platform for sharing information on environmental capacity building would be most effective if it remained *service oriented* generating its own '*demand'* based on the '*usefulness'* of the facility.

15. Although many agencies had information sharing mechanisms for storing and sharing development experiences internally, the study showed that there was no inter-agency mechanism that enabled EMG members' quick access to comparative experiences and related information on environmental capacity building. UN Agencies in particular expressed that quick access to key UN practical *experiences on environmental capacity building* and other project information would be very useful. This was very important for agencies such as UNU that were providing 'thematically oriented' technical assistance and training to governments on a regular basis. Easier access to information and resources from other knowledgeable agencies would support the quality of their own interventions. Attempts to do this however, should enable members to remain '*responsive and service oriented'*.

16. The study supported that the EMG should build on the experiences of existing information sharing systems. The study also supported that there was a demand for better inter-agency cooperation and for an information sharing mechanism and /or a strategy to support environmental capacity building institution wide. Enhanced information sharing between the EMG members was regarded by those interviewed as a means to support strengthening the linkages across the different sectors and developing a more 'horizontal approach'.

17. The comparative advantage of the EMG endorsed by interviewed members was that it hosted all the key stakeholders and therefore was well positioned to facilitate synergies among the different organizations involved in environmental capacity building initiatives. As such, it was a valid forum that could potentially provide support to enhance cooperation amongst the EMG 'network' at different levels.

18. The chair thanked the EMG consultant and invited the members to provide their comments and views on her presentation.

19. Commenting on the EMG's follow up work in the area of capacity building, the representative of CITES supported the notion of developing a common vocabulary on environmental capacity building as it could be translated differently by organizations. He supported possible future work of the EMG on developing a common vocabulary on capacity building, developing performance indicators for capacity building and sustainability of capacity building interventions. As such the EMG could also help its members, particularly the MEAs, in better incorporating the MDGs in their work program.

20. He also expressed his concern regarding the applicability of notions such as "interagency overarching information strategy" and "program alignment" for the non-Rio Conventions, given that the convention's programs had to be aligned with the needs of their own parties. He underlined that the study should bear in mind the agencies' concerns such as lack of time and resources when discussing the disincentives for interagency information sharing.

21. The chair sought the guidance of the Group on the nature of the EMG's future work in the area of capacity building as there had been proposals that the EMG should work on

more substantive dimensions such as definitions, common vocabulary, guidelines and performance indicators, as opposed to others which were in favor of working on tools such as a clearing house or a resource library.

22. The Representative of the UNEP Chemicals Unit stressed the identification of gaps and needs and the development of a demand driven approach prior to establishing any information sharing tools by the EMG.

23. The Representative of the UNFCCC emphasized the identification of needs as a prerequisite for establishing new information sharing mechanisms. Emphasizing the importance of capacity building delivery at the country level, he observed that the study in its present form did not have a bottom-up approach required for assessing the impacts of the agencies' capacity building efforts at the country level. He added that the information sharing per se was interesting and needed, however agencies would not share much information unless it would help them to achieve common goals.

24. The Representative of UNEP underlined that a vast amount of information on capacity building existed and what mattered was its relevance to the needs of the Group. The EMG should clearly identify the added value of its work vis-à-vis the existing information networks. He observed that the EMG should not aim at creating duplicative frameworks/groups on issues such as MDGs as many such groups already existed; including on financial aspects of the MDGs. He proposed that the study could include a few case studies where synergies could be shown and provide recommendations on the feasibility of more cooperation and the costs involved.

25. The consultant reiterated that the identification of gaps and synergies for cooperation would be the added value of the EMG's work. The uniqueness of the EMG's work would be its contribution to building synergies and collecting information on the agencies' experiences.

26. The Representative of WMO proposed that the consultant talk to more agencies, such as WMO, as their understanding of capacity building might differ from those of the interviewed organizations.

27. The Representative of UNDP observed that the idea of a clearinghouse might not be useful if it was only aimed at collecting information, as many information networks existed (such as the GEF clearing house) and many of the EMG members had informal contacts for information exchange. She therefore suggested that the EMG could consider establishing a clearinghouse, which would act as a marketing tool within which the agencies could show their best practices and the level of agencies' cooperation and partnerships to the governments, particularly to the donors.

28. The Representative of ITU proposed that given the agencies' different ways of data categorization, the Group should simply establish a portal, which would have links to the websites of the UN agencies.

29. The Representative of UNU highlighted the usefulness of the clearinghouse at the country level, as it informed the countries about the impacts of the capacity building activities, and at the agency level as it helped in building cooperation and avoiding duplication in the UN system.

30. The Chair thanked the members for their useful comments and concluded the discussion by mentioning that the study would be further developed taking into account the comments received and would be distributed to the members for information and follow-up discussion at the next meeting of the EMG.

D. The Report of the EMG to the UNEP Governing Council, including its medium term strategy and program of work for 2005

31. The chair introduced the draft report of the EMG to the 23rd session of the UNEP GC/GMEF, which would be held in Nairobi in February 2005. She underlined that the report included the EMG's activities in 2004 as well its medium-term strategy and work program for 2005. The main pillars of the proposed work program for 2005 included:

1. Addressing specific issues in the areas of environment and human settlements to provide, inter alia, information on the UN system activities, needs and gaps and to identify areas and possibilities for further interagency cooperation and coordination in the context of the EMG.

2. Contributing to major intergovernmental processes and forums on environment and sustainable development by providing a consolidated UN system input.

3. Strengthening cooperation with other formal or informal UN interagency frameworks such as HLCP/CEB, UNDG, UN Water, IOMC to ensure that environmental and human settlements issues were fully integrated in the implementation of the overall UN system work on sustainable development.

32. The issues proposed for the work program in 2005 included:

- Environmental capacity building (follow up work on enhancing information exchange)

- UN system sustainable procurement

- Air pollution, including indoor air pollution/atmosphere, Industrial practices with a focus on local and global emissions (proposed by UNDESA in the context of implementation of the 2006/2007 cycle of the CSD's multi year program of work)

- The urban poverty-environment nexus (proposed by UNHABITAT)

33. The chairperson then invited the members to provide comments on the EMG report.

34. A few suggestions and corrections were made on the format of the report and the proposed issues.

35. The Representative of UNESCO suggested the issue of "environmental education" to be considered by the Group in the context of the UN decade on education for sustainable development. She observed that her organization would provide additional information on the possible role of the EMG in addressing this issue.

E. Any other business

36. The chair informed the meeting on the implementation of the UNEPGC/GMEF decision SS.VIII/1 of 31 March 2004 which requested the UNEP Executive Director to present a report on the work of the Environmental Management Group including a comprehensive assessment of the location of the EMG Secretariat to the 23rd session of the Governing Council in February 2005. An independent consultant had been hired to prepare the report and had met with some EMG members to seek their views on this matter. Based on his findings and interviews with EMG members, as well as Government representatives, he would submit his report by the end of November to the UNEP Evaluation and Oversight Unit for consideration and subsequent submission to the upcoming session of the UNEP GC/GMEF.

F. Date and agenda for the next meeting

37. The Group agreed to hold its next meeting back to back with the next meeting of the IGSP IMG in early February 2005 in Geneva.

G. Closure of the meeting

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

ANNEX I

List of Participants
9th Meeting of the Environmental Management Group

Name	Organization
Monika Linn	EMG Secretariat (Chair)
Nelson Sabogal	Basel Convention
Stephen Nash	CITES
Mike Campbell	IAEA
Alexander Ntoko	ITU
Nuria Castells	UNCTAD
Bo Lim	UNDP
Mahenau Agha	UNDP
Levis Kavagi	UNEP
John Whitelaw	UNEP Chemicals
Peirre Quiblies	UNEP/HELI
Adnan Amin	UNEP New York Office
Kerstin Holst	UNESCO
Janos Pasztor	UNFCCC
Neslihan Grasser	UNFPA
Sylvie Lacroux	UN-Habitat
Valentine Ndibalema	UNHCR
Achim Halpaap	UNITAR
Craig Boljkovac	UNITAR
Jessica Green	UNU
Maged Younes	WHO
Yinka Adebayo	WMO
Fabrizio Zarcone	World Bank
Marie Isabelle Pellan	WTO
Hossein Fadaei	EMG Secretariat
Stephanie Hodge	Consultant