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UNEP/EA.1/3/Add.2: Report on the implementation of decisions adopted by past sessions of the governing body: Environment Management Group's work

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

Pursuant to decision 27/5 of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum at its 1st universal session, the present document provides a progress report on the work of the Environment Management Group including its issue specific and technical groups.

It presents information on the Group's activities and achievements in enhancing coherence in programming environmental activities, mainstreaming environment and enhancing sustainability in policies, programmes and management practices in the United Nations system. It sets out the Group's strategic approach and points out the directions of its future work as approved by the 19th meeting of the Senior Officials of the EMG.

The present progress report may assist the UN Environment Assembly of UNEP in performing its mandate as the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, that promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and that serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment.

* UNEP/EA.1/1.

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I. SUGGESTED ACTION BY THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

The Assembly may wish to consider the adoption of a Resolution along the lines suggested below:

The United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme,

Recognizing the role of the United Nations Environment Programme in enhancing coordination and collaboration across the United Nations system with a view to achieving greater coherence in environmental activities,

Recalling its decision GC 27/7, on enhanced coordination across the United Nations system, including the Environment Management Group,

Welcoming the efforts of the Executive Director, including in his capacity as Chair of the Environment Management Group, and those of the Group's members, in promoting cooperation and joint approaches across the United Nations system on environmental activities,

Expressing appreciation for the progress report prepared under the guidance of the senior officials of the Environment Management Group at their 19th meeting and as presented by the Executive Director¹,

Commending the Group on its progress in facilitating cooperation across the United Nations system with a view to assisting Member States in implementing the environmental agenda for sustainable development,

1. Supports the Group's continued efforts to enhance cooperation in mainstreaming environmental considerations into activities of the UN system at the policy, programme and management levels in close cooperation with the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and its subsidiary bodies;
2. Welcomes the Online Mapping Knowledge Management Tool on Biodiversity prepared by the Group in support of implementation of Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 as well as Group's approach to contribute to the mid-term review process of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and considering ways to integrate the Aichi Biodiversity Targets into country level planning tools such as the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF);
3. Welcomes in particular the Group's contribution to the 11th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa by providing a UN Action Plan (2012-2018) for Coordinated Action in the Drylands;
4. Supports the Group's recent decision to establish the Issue Management Group on Sound Management of Chemicals for raising the profile of sound chemicals management within all relevant organizations of the UN System and promoting integration of chemicals management issues in broader context of economic and social development planning including in the context of the SDGs and to ensure additional synergies between the UN organizations in supporting countries in activities to achieve the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) goal for 2020;
5. Underscores the importance of promoting sustainability in the work of the United Nations system, and encourages the Group to continue to support these efforts, including in the areas of environmental sustainability management and environmental peer reviews:
6. Requests the Executive Director in his capacity as the Chair of the Group to transmit a progress report on the Group's work to the governing bodies of the Group's member organizations.
7. Requests the Executive Director in his capacity as Chair of the Group to provide a progress report on the Group's work to the United Nations Environment Assembly at its Second Session.

¹ UNEP/EA.13/Add.2

II. BACKGROUND

In decision 27/5 on enhanced coordination across the United Nations system, including the Environment Management Group, the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum at its first universal session, expressed appreciation for a progress report prepared under the guidance of the senior officials of the Group at their 18th meeting and presented by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) including the strategic considerations of the Group in supporting the implementation of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want"², and also contributing to the post 2015 development agenda.

The Council encouraged the Group to continue to promote coherence in programming environmental activities in the United Nations system, in close cooperation with the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and its subsidiary bodies and requested the Executive Director in his capacity as Chair of the Group to submit a progress report on the Group's work to the next session of the governing body of the United Nations Environment Programme;

The present progress report may assist the United Nations Environment Assembly in performing its mandate as the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, that promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and that serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment. It may also assist the Environment Assembly in its deliberations on the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20 in particular on enhancing UNEP's voice and ability to fulfill its coordination mandate within the United Nations system.³

The 19th meeting of the senior officials of the Group was held on 19 September 2013 and was co-chaired by Mr. Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP and Chair of the Environment Management Group, and Ms. Rebeca Grynspan, Associate Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The co-chairs welcomed Mr. Mukhisa Kituyi, the newly appointed Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and Mr. Elliott Harris, the new Director of the UNEP New York Office and the EMG secretariat. They expressed appreciation for the guidance received from the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum at its 1st universal session and requested the Chair to continue the practice of submitting a progress report by the EMG to the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP. The documentation of the meeting is available on the Group's website (www.unemg.org).

III. Strategic views of the EMG senior officials on the future work of the EMG in support of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda

At their 19th annual meeting the senior officials of the EMG considered the EMG's progress of work in 2013 and approved the EMG's workplan for 2014-2015. In doing so, the senior officials provided the following strategic views for EMG's future work:

- 1) The EMG possesses broad environmental expertise which benefits a large number of organizations. The issue-based and time-bound nature of the group's work is an advantage as it allows a flexible response to emerging issues in need of coordinated response;
- 2) The EMG, as a UN system-wide coordination body on environmental matters, holds significant potential and relevance for the follow-up process of Rio+20, supporting the post 2015 development agenda and advancing the environmental aspects of sustainability.
- 3) An important role for the EMG should be to ensure the involvement of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) in the development and implementation of the post 2015 agenda. The EMG could also

² General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex.

³ Paragraph 88 c of the outcome document of the Rio+20 Conference

play a significant role in mainstreaming the environmental aspect of sustainable development into all aspects of the UN system. Further, the EMG should work to support the High Level Political Forum on sustainable development by delivering guidance for strategic policy making and promoting a stronger science-policy interface;

4) While the outcome of Rio+20 was identified as a guide for operational direction, EMG members should take the opportunity to consider how to identify new environmental issues and topics that would benefit from a coordinated approach. A mechanism is needed for the collective and timely identification of topics and to help the EMG become more outward looking and respond to needs as they arise;

5) Recalling that UN Members, e.g. their governments, authorities, public and private institutions, their private sector and civil society, their medias and ultimately their citizens are the ultimate beneficiaries of the actions taken, the relevance of considering country perspectives and needs when addressing new issues within the EMG was highlighted. More focus should be put on the systematic up-scaling of initiatives promoting bottom-up in coherence with and support of top-down approaches.

The senior officials also considered two new issues for future focus of the EMG namely a strategic approach to the sound management of chemicals as well as stocktaking of financing/funding for environment in the context of sustainable development. They agreed to establish an Issue Management Group on Sound Management of Chemicals based on a Terms of Reference proposed in consultation with the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC). Regarding the issue of environmental funding/financing, the senior officials took note of the on-going stocktaking of financing for sustainable development being carried out by the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing. The senior officials agreed to await the outcome of the stocktaking by the Committee of Experts and revisit the issue at their next meeting.

IV. Enhanced coherence in programming environmental activities in the United Nations system, including mainstreaming

A. Issue Management Group on Biodiversity

Following the EMG Report “Advancing the Biodiversity Agenda, A UN System-Wide Contribution”, the Convention on Biological Diversity BD COP 11 (8-19 October 2012, Hyderabad, India)⁴ highlighted the contribution of the EMG Issue Management Group on Biodiversity, welcomed its progress report and invited it to continue facilitating cooperation among its members in support of the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and to provide a progress report for consideration by the COP at its next meeting. The UNEP Governing Council also at its first universal session in February 2013 reiterated the CBD COP11 decision and invited the EMG to continue facilitating cooperation among its members in support of the Strategic Plan.

The IMG held its 8th meeting on 30 May 2013, in the margins of the Biodiversity Conference in Trondheim Norway, co-chaired by the CBD and UNESCO. The IMG welcomed the paper prepared by the CBD titled “The relevance of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and the Aichi Targets for the SDGs” as a good starting point that could feed into the preparations for the SDGs/post-2015 framework. They agreed to highlight the Strategic Plan and the Aichi Targets through coordinated submissions through their agency focal points to the UN Task Team on the Post 2015 Development Agenda. The IMG also considered the Online Biodiversity Mapping Tool containing information on UN agencies’ key functions, tools, indicators and decisions in support of each Aichi Biodiversity Target. Following the suggestion of the CBD Executive Secretary, the IMG members expressed interest to take leading or contributing roles vis-à-vis one or more Aichi Targets.

The EMG senior officials in their 19th meeting emphasized the importance of action at the national level and agreed that IMG should play a role in supporting implementation of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets by helping to integrate them into national level strategies and planning tools such as the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs). They agreed to continue the IMG for another year to present

⁴ Decision XI on “cooperation with other conventions, international organizations, and initiatives”

the online biodiversity mapping tool to CBD SBSTTA 17, transfer it to the CBD for future maintenance and make it available to Member States and other stakeholders. They agreed to contribute, as appropriate, to the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans Forum (NBSAPs Forum) for the review and implementation of the NBSAPs. They also agreed to contribute to the mid-term review process of the Aichi Targets, including by providing indicators and data, in particular those relevant to the national level implementation of the targets. The outcome of the IMG's work will be presented in a progress report to the Conference of the Parties of the CBD at its 12th meeting in October 2014.

B. Issue Management Group on Land

The issue management group on land was established in 2009 to contribute to the implementation of the "10 year strategic plan of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification" (UNCCD). It produced an EMG report ("Global Drylands: A United Nations System-wide Contribution") which was submitted to the Conference of the Parties of the UNCCD at its 10th meeting, held in Changwon, Republic of Korea, in October 2011. The mandate of the IMG on Land was extended by the senior officials of their EMG at their 18th meeting to enable it to prepare an Action Plan on the implementation of the "Global Drylands Report" (GDR) for consideration of the 11th COP of the UNCCD.

The UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum at its 1st universal session in February 2013, reiterated the decision of COP10 and encouraged the work of the EMG in preparing the Action Plan. The Action Plan concept note was submitted to the 11th session of the Committee for the Review and Implementation of the UNCCD (CRIC11)⁵; and outline of the action plan was discussed by the IMG at its 4th meeting on 17 April 2013 in Bonn, Germany in the margins of the CRIC11. The final "Action Plan for coordinated action in the Drylands" was submitted for for consideration of the senior officials of the EMG, CRIC 12 and the UNCCD COP11 in Windhoek, Namibia, 16-27 September 2013.

The Action Plan focuses on implementation of the recommendations of the GDR through the identification of Specific Target Areas in Drylands (STADs) within the National Action Plans (NAPs) where effective collaboration between local, national and international mechanisms can attain measurable, time-framed and comparable concrete results in the reduction of degraded lands. The framework will be tested through a limited sample of STADs per geographical region, with a view to :

- Establishing a sample of geographically representative Specific Target Areas in Drylands (STADs) within aligned National Action Plans and identifying relevant stakeholders;
- Selecting an initial set of STADs for the start-up phase of the Action Plan; and
- Establishing time framed specific targets quantifying the reversal of land degradation.

At their 19th meeting, the EMG senior officials approved the Action Plan and, in view of the accomplishment of its tasks, decided to conclude the work of the EMG on land by the submission of the final Action Plan to the 14th

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