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Informal consultative process of the Plenary on the issue of the institutional framework for the environmental activities of the United Nations in follow-up to paragraph 169 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome

Statement by

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on behalf of the European Union

New York, 26 October 2007

M. Co-Chairs,

I will be speaking on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and the EFTA country Iceland, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

I would like to start by conveying our sincere appreciation to you, the two Co-Chairs of the informal consultation process of the plenary, Ambassador Claude Heller from Mexico and Ambassador Peter Maurer from Switzerland, for convening this meeting as part of the ongoing informal consultations process on the institutional framework for the environmental activities of the UN, in the follow-up to paragraph 169 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome.

As mentioned before, in this and other *fora*, the European Union fully supports this process of informal consultations on the International Environmental Governance (IEG) and trusts that this format will allow for a substantive, inclusive and transparent exchange of views on all relevant issues, based on the engagement of all relevant stakeholders and lead to a real upgrade of the current system of IEG.

The European Union would like to take this occasion to thank again the Co-Chairs for having prepared the "Options Paper" on IEG, which contains a comprehensive and valuable overview of the key problems and issues at stake. We welcome it as a positive and useful contribution to the reform process. In fact, and despite the complexity of the issues involved and the variety of ideas and positions expressed by Member States, the Co-Chairs skillfully managed to capture the comments and positions expressed by delegations in a systematic and consistent way.

M. Co-Chairs,

The European Union has recently conveyed to you its first formal and written reaction on this document. The positions of the European Union are broadly in line with the Co-Chairs' analysis of the current system of IEG and, in general, most of the options proposed by the co chairs merit the support of the European Union.

The seven "Building Blocks" presented in the Options Paper provide a valuable basis for taking forward our work to improve environmental governance. We can make progress now,

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

while also looking to the future. Many ideas elaborated in the Options Paper have already been agreed by the Member States and of these we should not further delay their implementation while simultaneously ensuring they do not lead to increased bureaucratic structures and burdens and clarifying in particular their organizational, legal and financial impact. The solutions adopted for individual building blocks should be mutually reinforcing and contribute to a more coherent overall structure.

Regarding the future organization of the work this process entails, the European Union strongly supports the Co-Chairs proposals to continue with the informal consultations process, as well as the continued exploration of possibilities for a more coherent institutional framework for environmental governance throughout this 62nd session of the GA. We would therefore be ready to further elaborate on the "Building Blocks" identified in the "Options Paper" and would welcome indications from the Co-Chairs on how to proceed, on the basis of an indicative calendar, so that the wider membership could prepare for such discussions, taking advantage of key meetings throughout the year to drive the process forward.

Concurrently, and also in line with the Co-Chairs' proposals on the "Options Paper", the European Union reiterates the need to start formal negotiations on a broader transformation of the IEG system no later than the beginning of the 63rd session of the GA.

M. Co-Chairs,

The European Union is ready to work with all UN members as well as relevant stakeholders to ambitiously and incrementally improve IEG.

Significant strengthening of the IEG system can be achieved through short- and medium-term reform, such as the measures included in the proposed seven building blocks. The European Union also firmly believes that more ambitious reforms will be required to provide the UN with the strengthened environmental architecture needed to tackle the growing environmental challenges we face.

Therefore, the European Union feels encouraged to work for the establishment of a UN Environment Organisation, in Nairobi, based on UNEP, with a revised and strengthened mandate, supported by stable, adequate and predictable financial contributions and operating on an equal footing with other UN specialised Agencies.

Indeed, a step by step approach and a broader transformation of the IEG system, including the institution of a UN Environment Organisation, are two complementary approaches to strengthening IEG.

Thanks for your attention.