



United Nations
Environment Management Group

Strengthening International Environment Governance

Initial pointers and ideas

Prepared by the
Environment Management Group (EMG) on behalf of the
EMG Issue Management Group on the “Environmental Cluster”

For the Deputy-Secretary-General

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Introduction:

1. Wide ranging views have been expressed on the need for more coherence in the development and delivery of environment related activities at international level. Given the fact that international organizations derive from activities at national and regional level, the question of coherence hence naturally reflects the situations at national level. The need to improve coherence has led to dialogue and some forms of actions. While decisions on any changes to be made to the IEG framework are exclusively in the hands of Governments, the secretariats of UN agencies and MEAs believe that they have a responsibility to provide useful information and views to inform inter-governmental discussions and related decision-making. Such contributions from secretariats will help in ensuring their ownership and eventually their successful implementation of any reform that may be agreed.
2. In order for the UN system to arrive at coherent views on these, at the first meeting of the High-Level Advisory Group on System-Wide Coherence, chaired by the Deputy Secretary General (DSG) in New York on 25 May 2007, the UNEP Executive Director was requested by the DSG to facilitate a process to consider the environment-related recommendations.
3. On 14 June 2007 Ambassadors Maurer and Heller have also presented to the GA their Co-Chair's Options Paper on the institutional framework for the UN's Environmental Activities. Several informal consultations have taken place since then.
4. Following these developments, early in August the Executive Director of UNEP (chair of EMG) tasked the EMG Secretariat in early August 2007 with gathering the views of different organizations, through a number of questions on the options presented in the Co-Chairs paper. In mid August, all EMG members were invited to contribute and participate.
5. A synthesis paper was then prepared by EMG Secretariat based on the written responses of twenty agencies to the questionnaire. The main ideas that emerged from the synthesis paper were further discussed during a meeting of an Issue Management Group dedicated to these issues, facilitated by the EMG Secretariat, in Geneva on 5 September 2007. Twenty-six EMG members were able to participate in this exercise, either by providing inputs or attending the meeting (or both), including ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, BASEL, CBD, CITES, CMS, IMO, UNCCD, UNCTAD, UNDESA, UNFCCC, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNDP, UN HABITAT, UNHCR, UNIDO, UNISDR, UNICEF, WHO, WTO, WMO, and the World Bank.



6. In spite of the very short time available for response, many agencies were willing and quick to provide views and exchange opinions. The quality of the inputs was excellent, and many respondents engaged their executive heads in finalizing the responses. Additional inputs were promised by agencies which could not make their contributions available by the deadline, and the synthesis paper will be finalized for the 8 October 2007 annual meeting of the EMG.
7. Participants at the 5 September were of the opinion that it would be necessary to provide preliminary views and ideas to the DSG and, through the DSG, to Member States as they gather on 10-11 September to informally consider the Co-chairs' report on this subject. Some consider it important to wait until Member States have developed directions for taking the discussion forward. A set of coherent, system-wide views from the agencies through the EMG process would send a signal to Member States that the UN agencies are living up to their responsibilities and are staying engaged in the process.
8. The ideas generated from these inputs to and the discussions during the meeting on 5 September allowed the group to: Exchange preliminary views on options under discussion; Identify obstacles encountered or successes achieved by agencies in enhancing the coherence of the system; Suggest areas that might need further exploration and discussion; Flag issues that are considered to have some merit for enhancing coherence of the system; and Identify the possible implications the options and recommendations might have on the UN system.

I. Existing cooperation and coordination efforts and mechanisms

9. ***The group recognized that work is ongoing within the UN system to enhance cooperation and improve coherence. A lot can be learned from the numerous current initiatives and mechanisms and some of the more recent initiatives might not be sufficiently known.***
 - a. Although there exists considerable level of cooperation at international level, there is still room for improved cooperation and joint action, especially in the UN system through better use of existing structures and mechanisms and of course by learning from various experiences gained under them;
 - b. In particular regarding the implementation of adopted environmental policies, broader participation of the UN system is needed to enhance coherence, but efforts are under way for instance in the area of climate change;
 - c. Examples of ongoing cooperation and synergies and work at different levels are as follows:

Global:

 - i. Coordination bodies such as UN Water, UN Energy and UN Oceans have succeeded in sharing information and aligning programs/actions amongst the participating agencies;



- ii. A broad range of processes embarked upon by several agencies to make better use of existing structures (e.g. the UNEP+ package) and to strengthen their delivery mechanism on environment issues;
- iii. The Secretary-General's Policy Committee and, more recently, the Chief Executives Board (CEB) have embarked on ambitious efforts to ensure a system-wide response to climate change, and in the areas of energy and disaster reduction.

Regional

- iv. At the regional level there are successful examples of coordination with UNEP and other IGOs, such as the Environment for Europe process of UNECE, or the Ministerial Conference on Environment and development in Asia and the Pacific;
- v. UNEP and UNFCCC have initiated regional preparatory meetings for the climate change COP in Bali this year;

Issue specific

- vi. Intersectoral task forces have been established, like the UNESCO Task Force on Global Climate Change
 - vii. The Nairobi Framework was initiated by the S-G in 2006 as a collaborative effort by several agencies (UNDP, UNEP, UNFCCC, the World Bank and the African Development Bank) to build capacity in those developing countries that are not yet able to access the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism.
 - viii. Ad hoc issue based partnerships have been established amongst agencies, examples are the cooperation of all UN agencies on Water issues, WMO-WHO, or WHO-UNEP cooperation on health issues, UNEP-IMO on oil or chemical spills, CMS-FAO and other agencies on avian flu, the CMS-CITES cooperation on saiga antelope, the cooperation between CITES and UNCTAD Biotrade initiative, as well as several UNDP ad hoc partnerships with other agencies.
- d. There are examples of ongoing initiatives and efforts to enhance coherence and improve cooperation, for instance:
- ix. The work of the UN agencies through the EMG to "green the UN", especially by reaching Climate Neutrality, and by adopting sustainable procurement approaches;
 - x. Improved cooperation efforts amongst MEAs (the Biodiversity Liaison Group, various other efforts in relation to biodiversity, the recently enhanced JLG for the Rio Conventions, Chemicals, etc.);
 - xi. Coordination mechanisms and initiatives for the implementation of MDGs and WSSD goals (e.g. the 2010 target to reduce the rate of biodiversity loss).



II. The UN system is ready to enhance efforts to improve system-wide coherence for delivering on the ground

10. In addition to what has already been implemented through existing mechanisms and efforts, the UN system is ready to consider additional ways and means to increase coherence. However, further progress depends on a number of factors.

- a. Despite all the efforts made, there is still need for enhanced coherence, in particular with regards to implementation efforts to integrate, mainstream and to deal effectively with environment issues in work programmes of all agencies. In this connection, the ultimate goal of coherence are the accumulated results of cooperative efforts on concrete issues and themes: to achieve this there is a need to fully involve all actors and work collectively amongst agencies and with Governments;
- b. Several of the elements proposed in the Co-chairs' paper, and summarised under the two definitions of "ambitious incrementalism" and "transformation changes", are important to the success of the reform, and both tracks could be pursued in parallel;
- c. Some of the options provided in the paper are feasible, given the necessary resources, incentives and leadership. However such resources, incentives and leadership do not yet exist in all cases. Their implementation also depends on a number of factors, and realistic, pragmatic approaches have to be taken;
- d. One of the most important factors is the availability and distribution of funds to enhance coordination, to increase the capacity of the UN system to deliver on environment issues, increase activities, and make progress on implementation of recommendations and work programmes;
- e. Some of the recommendations are being implemented through ongoing cooperation efforts. Others can be implemented immediately, since they depend only on internal processes of respective agencies: agencies recognize this and are reviewing recommendations and taking action, as appropriate. Again others depend on decisions of the General Assembly, of governing bodies of the agencies, and of conferences of parties (COPs).
- f. UN agencies and secretariats of MEAs are already collaborating, and have responsibility to do more. This will be more effective, however, if it is fully matched by coherent decisions by governments in the GA and in the various governing bodies, including COPs;
- g. Efforts at the country level to reduce fragmentation amongst agencies at the national level could also greatly contribute to enhancing coherence of the international environmental governance framework.



III. Towards more coherence through cooperation

11. The group considered some additional recommendations and expressed its views on those based on past and current experiences. The group found merit in a number of those suggestions.

- a. The UN system will capitalize on experiences and existing initiatives to reduce fragmentation and improve coherence and use them as the foundation for further work;
- b. The system does not necessarily need additional coordination mechanisms, but rather better defined platforms for issue- or theme-based cooperation that could result in enhanced systemic coherence;
- c. There is merit in the specialization of agencies, and in the thematic and specific contributions of each agency to cross-cutting environmental issues (e.g., on climate change, water and air pollution);
- d. Thus, cooperation exercises and mechanisms are likely be more effective when issue-based and strategically organized around thematic ‘consortia’ of agencies, instead of traditional exercises in general coordination;
- e. An issue-based approach could also assist the current debate on coherence on issues being addressed within the framework of MEAs;
- f. Partnerships to enhance and promote cooperation should be enhanced both within and outside the UN family (including agencies and MEAs). Merit is seen in including both civil society and the business sector in the partnerships;
- g. The framework of international environmental governance would also benefit from an increased valuing and strengthening of the role of regional commissions.

IV. Other issues that might need further discussion and consideration

12. The group also felt that a number of issues, only partially addressed in the Co-chairs Paper or discussed during the meeting, need further discussion and consideration. These are:

- a. How could we achieve an optimal working relationship between agencies at the country level and how we might coordinate country-level activities in the context of the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building?
- b. How to clarify the roles and specificities of the different intergovernmental institutions dealing with environment and sustainable development (e.g., GC/GMEF, CSD, COPs, etc.);
- c. How to increase policy coherence amongst the three pillars of sustainable development, including enhanced coherence between the environmental and economic/trade agendas;



- d. How to better address and further elaborate on the crucial question of resource availability, in particular funding, not only to increase coherence but to enable agencies to implement agreed environmental activities, within their mandates.

V. Proposals for the way forward

13. The group felt that this initial exchange of views could be very useful to both the agencies themselves and Members States. As this was a very first step, the group is of the opinion that the work under the EMG's Issue Management Group for the 'environment cluster' should be continued and be further guided by ongoing discussions of Member States, which will likely result in additional proposals. The views expressed above only constitute an initial reaction, and the group needs more time to reflect, and provide its collective views on existing and any future options still to come. Some key points for the process for the way forward were identified.

- a. Agencies are prepared to continue with ongoing efforts and report collectively to the GA on successes, but also to assess and address obstacles and needs;
- b. Agencies are willing to work together, through available cooperative platform, to explore the possibilities for 'issue based' cooperation exercises to enhance coherence (such as the EMG);
- c. Global convention secretariats are ready to collectively explore whether there is potential for further cooperation and to identify issues where this can be useful;
- d. Within the limit of their respective competencies and mandates, agencies are prepared to continue the implementation of the "Cartagena package" to improve coherence, strengthen the role and financial situation of UNEP, improve MEAs coherence, capacity building, technology transfer and country-level coordination and enhance coordination across the UN system;
- e. Agencies are prepared to respond to guidance by Member States in the context of the ongoing discussions on transformative changes and share experience gained through the 'environment cluster' and other coordination and coherence efforts.