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CO-ORDINATION QUESTIONS

This document is divided into two parts, reflecting the two sub-items under agenda item 5, co-ordination questions.

Part I consists of the report of ACC to the Governing Council on co-ordination in the field of the environment, with an appendix summarizing the discussions at thematic joint programming meetings.

Part II presents the reports of the Executive Director on developments in the preparation of the system-wide medium-term environment programme and on the joint meeting of the Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements and the bureau of the Commission on Human Settlements with the Executive Director of UNEP and the bureau of its Governing Council. It also reports on co-operation with the regional commissions of the United Nations.

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I

REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON CO-ORDINATION TO THE GOVERNING COUNCIL OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME AT ITS EIGHTH SESSION

A. INTRODUCTION

1. This report is submitted to the Governing Council of UNEP in discharge of the responsibilities assumed by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) pursuant to General Assembly resolution 32/197 of 20 December 1977 on restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system, and as envisaged in relevant decisions of the Governing Council, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. ACC notes that its first report, submitted to the Governing Council at its seventh session, as document UNEP/GC.7/5, was received with appreciation by the Governing Council. It also notes that the Governing Council, by decision 7/1 of 3 May 1979, urged ACC to keep it informed of progress and of any difficulties in co-ordinating work in international co-operation in the field of the environment.

2. In exercising responsibility for the preparatory process for consideration by ACC of environmental and desertification matters and the reporting thereon by it to the Governing Council, the Executive Director convened a meeting of officials designated by the executive heads of members of ACC to deal with environmental matters. This meeting was held at Geneva from 18 to 21 September 1979 at the kind invitation of WHO, and was immediately preceded by the second session of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Desertification.

B. CO-ORDINATION AND CO-OPERATION BETWEEN UNEP AND THE ORGANIZATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS STYSTEM

3. While the concerns of their organizations for environmental problems varied considerably in scope and while the nature of their relationships with UNEP differed in many ways, ACC members had a deep and common interest in the continued success of UNEP as a major tool for the improvement and protection of the human environment. They considered, therefore, that it was necessary to review regularly the general questions of co-ordination and co-operation between organizations and UNEP. In that respect, they were currently concerned with the following main problems:

(a) The excessively wide scope and complexity of UNEP's activities as reflected in the environment programme;

(b) The related difficulty UNEP faced in fulfilling effectively its stimulation and co-ordination roles within the United Nations system;

(c) The ways and means through which certain projects were implemented with the support of UNEP.

4. ACC members recalled that the main functions of UNEP, namely the stimulation and co-ordination of environmental activities in the United Nations system, could best be performed, on the one hand, by the conceptual influence which UNEP could exercise on the various organizations, including their governing bodies, and on the other hand, by the catalytic role of its Environment Fund through co-operative programmes and projects. They considered that the very foundations upon which UNEP had been established would be undermined if the environment were to become a sectoral activity rather than a dimension and a component of all economic and social development activities.

5. ACC members felt that comprehensive presentation of all activities of the organizations of the United Nations system having a direct bearing on the environment constituted an extremely difficult exercise. They recognized, however, that such a broad presentation of information to the Governing Council of UNEP was necessary for co-ordination purposes. Thereafter, in their opinion, UNEP should, in order to exercise its catalytic function effectively, endeavour in formulating an action programme to concentrate its efforts on those environmental problems which could be considered as having the highest priority and on those areas where its influence could be most decisive. Noting that UNEP had to be fully aware of environmental matters considered by governing bodies of agencies, ACC members agreed to keep UNEP informed of the deliberations and resolutions of their governing bodies.

6. The ACC members most heavily involved in co-operative programmes with UNEP considered that the burden placed upon them, partly as a consequence of the complexity and wide scope of UNEP's activities, partly because of administrative procedures, had become excessive. They felt that further efforts should be made to avoid proliferation of meetings and to reduce requests for information. The organizations concerned had increasing difficulties in responding adequately, and simplification in working mechanisms could lead to more effective co-ordination.

7. Regarding the implementation of projects supported by the Environment Fund, ACC members concerned felt that the greatest possible flexibility on technical matters, compatible with UNEP's overall co-ordinating responsibilities, should be left to the co-operating organizations once the projects had been well defined and approved.

8. ACC members considered that projects falling within the fields of competence of particular United Nations organizations should normally be implemented through co-operation with those organizations. That in no way excluded the implementation of projects through co-operation with competent international non-governmental organizations when that constituted the best approach to a given problem. There might also be instances where direct arrangements had to be made with national institutions in developed or developing countries to perform activities and functions that normally pertained to organizations of the United Nations system. Prior consultations with the United Nations organization concerned

should normally take place, however, before such arrangements were made. In the same manner, and in order to fulfil its co-ordination role most effectively, UNEP should avoid involving itself in operational activities either directly or indirectly through the establishment of ad hoc centres, unless there was mutual agreement with the organizations concerned that to do so was the best way of conducting a specific project or programme.

9. ACC members agreed that bilateral joint programming and thematic joint programming could become important tools in the progressive achievement of the objectives of UNEP within the United Nations system. Thematic joint programming should therefore be thoroughly prepared and should result in concrete proposals to be incorporated at the present stage in the environment programme - and subsequently in the system-wide medium-term environment programme when it was established - regarding both the substance of activities and the involvement of the Environment Fund.

10. ACC members were convinced that the problem encountered with respect to co-ordination and co-operation with UNEP could be progressively resolved, and they expressed their appreciation for the most serious consideration which the Executive Director of UNEP was giving to their preoccupations.

C. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS IN THE NEW INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

11. ACC recalled that by its resolution 33/86 of 15 December 1978, the General Assembly had called upon all bodies and organizations of the United Nations system involved in the elaboration of the new international development strategy to take environmental concerns into full account, in view of the close interrelationship between environment and development. ACC members were informed of the statement made by the Executive Director of UNEP to the Preparatory Committee for the New International Development Strategy in June 1979. The Executive Director's statement reflected the views of the Governing Council, as it had requested.

12. ACC noted that preparations for the new strategy were still at a formative stage. The contributions of the organizations had not yet focussed fully on the ways in which the targets under consideration would be reached, and the environmental dimension had thus not been explicitly included in their contributions. It was felt that UNEP should take a leading role in presenting the views of the United Nations system to the Preparatory Committee for the Strategy to ensure that environmental considerations were taken fully into account.

13. Studies were being carried out by a number of organizations on the long-term perspectives and policies for development, such as FAO's studies on the state of natural resources for food and agriculture towards the year 2000, WHO's studies on health for all by the year 2000, and ILO's studies on the assessment of basic human needs. Environmental considerations were being taken fully into account in those studies. Accordingly, as the studies influenced the contributions of the organizations to the

framing of the strategy, and the long-term perspective in which the strategy would find its context, it was expected that the issues of the natural resources base, the environment and the need for sustainable development would emerge more clearly.

14. ACC noted the organization jointly by the regional commissions and UNEP of seminars in each region on alternative patterns of development and life-styles. The results of those seminars would be further examined by an inter-regional meeting, to be convened in 1980, which was expected to prepare an important contribution to the work of the Preparatory Committee for the new strategy and the 1980 special session of the General Assembly. ACC expressed the desire that the results of the seminars and of the inter-regional meeting be made available to its members. It was noted that the seminar held in the Africa region in March 1979 had focussed on a critical examination of current patterns of economic development and life-styles in African countries, and searched for authentic alternative ways of achieving desirable socio-economic objectives. A strategy document had emerged, containing guiding principles and a Plan of Action, and had been put before the Conference of Ministers held at Rabat in March 1979. The Conference of Ministers had subsequently adopted a resolution on the development strategy for Africa for the next development decade which took account of a number of environmental considerations.

15. ACC recalled that the General Assembly, in its resolution 3345 (XXIX) of 17 December 1974 on research on interrelationships between population, resources, environment and development, had requested the Secretary-General to provide facilities for co-ordinated multidisciplinary research aimed at synthesizing, integrating and advancing existing knowledge of those inter-relationships, and decided that the results from the research activities should be submitted to the Economic and Social Council with the comments inter alia of the Governing Council of UNEP. A report on current research in the United Nations system had been considered by the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session in 1979; the Council had requested that multidisciplinary studies should be undertaken as part of the research activities within the organizations of the system, and requested the Secretary-General to report to the Council at its second regular session in 1981 on the result of these activities on a system-wide basis. The Governing Council of UNEP would consider the matter at its eighth session.

16. At the invitation of the Swedish Government, a United Nations symposium on those interrelationships had been held at Stockholm from 6 to 10 August 1979, with the participation of high-level policy-makers of various disciplines from both within and outside the United Nations system. The Statement of the symposium, and copies of statements made at the symposium by its two co-chairmen, the Foreign Minister of Sweden and the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation, and of the statement made by the Director-General of FAO who had participated at the Symposium, had been made available to ACC members.

17. ACC welcomed the symposium Statement as a most useful basis for further work on the interrelationships. The symposium had confirmed the need to use the environmental approach in major programmes for development. Many of the studies being carried out in the United Nations system were highly relevant, including those referred to in paragraph 13 above, as are such activities as the development of the World Climate Programme by WMO. ACC recognized the need that, within many of the agencies, the interactions discussed at Stockholm, as well as other major interactions affecting development, should become parameters for programme orientation and reorientation as appropriate. Examples were the recognition by the World Health Organization of environmental improvement as a major component in programmes for primary health care, which was seen by the World Health Assembly as a key to achieving the social target of health for all by the year 2000, and the concept of a third agricultural revolution advanced by the Director-General of FAO. Further work should influence the activities of the United Nations system by helping to identify areas where a concentration of actior. and of resources should lead to positive results in the context of the interrelatedness of issues.

18. ACC considered that UNEP's role in regard to work on interrelationships was fundamental to its mandate and should be actively pursued within UNEP itself and through its contribution to system-wide efforts such as those required by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. The results of such work would also enable UNEP to identify those areas where a further concentration of its activities would be beneficial, and enable it to contribute more effectively to the overall concerns of the United Nations system in providing for sustainable development. That would help focus attention on the environmental considerations which UNEP was proposing for incorporation into the new international development strategy.

19. ACC agreed that it should be kept informed of progress in regard to studies on the interrelationships and on areas where further action will be required.

D. THE SYSTEM-WIDE MEDIUM-TERM ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

20. ACC recalled that it had agreed to assist in the implementation of the decision of the Governing Council of UNEP to move toward a system-wide medium-term environment programme. That decision had subsequently been welcomed by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC), the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

21. CPC at its nineteenth session, in May 1979, had reviewed the process of medium-term planning in the United Nations in-depth and had made a number of recommendations to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. CPC envisaged that the United Nations medium-term plan would commence in 1984 and cover a period of six years, thus bringing about a coincidence in the starting dates and durations of the medium-term plans of those organizations of the United Nations system that used medium-term planning. The first system-wide medium-term environment

programme would accordingly cover the period 1984-1989, and would be considered by the Governing Council of UNEP in 1982. The Executive Director would submit to the Governing Council of UNEP at its eighth session sample medium-term presentations, and the first draft of such samples had been the subject of consultations with ACC members.

22. ACC welcomed the association of M. Bertrand of the Joint Inspection Unit with the preparation of the methodology employed. In that connexion it noted also the recent experience of WHO with the preparation of a medium-term programme for environmental health.

23. ACC considered that the methodology employed in the preparation of the first samples was entirely conducive to the further development of thematic joint programming, which should be the basis for the preparation of the system-wide programme. ACC felt that thematic joint programming carried out so far had been useful mostly as an information exchange tool permitting duplication of efforts to be avoided, and should be developed into an effective programming instrument, carefully prepared. The emphasis on agreement on the objectives to be achieved in the medium-term period was most helpful in that regard, and was also consonant with FAO's approach which was based on the development of medium-term objectives. The system-wide programme should be developed as a management tool for all organizations concerned; clearly they should play a major role in the preparation of the programme, which should reflect the results of detailed consultations with them. ACC noted that the degree of detail to be included in the medium-term programme would vary with the time period within the programme to which the details related, and also with the needs of relevant inter-governmental bodies for information in regard to particular portions of the programme. Such variable information density was entirely in line with the views of CPC.

24. ACC reiterated its willingness to co-operate closely with UNEP in the development of the system-wide programme, and agreed that, following consideration by the Governing Council of the sample presentations, guidelines would need to be drafted which would provide a basis for the detailed contribution of the organizations to the system-wide programme. It was noted that in that regard the preparation of the system-wide programme should be designed to ensure consultations with the organizations concerned at an early stage in the programming process, thus making it possible to reflect the results of those consultations not only in the system-wide medium-term programme, but also in relevant documents of the co-operating agencies. The framing of the medium-term programme should hopefully enable those concerned with its implementation to exercise discipline in the planning of additional activities and could bring about a concentration of effort.

25. ACC noted that the Governing Council had asked for the development of a programme perspective document to provide a context for the system-wide medium-term environment programme. A sample of the programme perspective document had been made available to ACC members. ACC noted that the programme perspective presentation to the UNEP Governing Council

at its eighth session would have an experimental character. CPC itself was considering the nature of the introduction to the United Nations medium-term plan, and its conclusions in that regard would also be germane to the preparation of the programme perspective document.

26. Since the last report of ACC to the Council, thematic joint programming had been carried out in the following areas: the working environment, genetic resources, wildlife and protected areas, marine pollution and marine living resources. It was agreed that summaries of those thematic joint programming exercises would be annexed to the present report after they had been cleared by the designated officials for environmental matters at their meeting to be held at Nairobi from 3 to 7 December 1979.

27. ACC noted that the Working Group on Earthwatch and its sub-groups continued to perform their functions effectively and were assisting the Executive Director in harmonizing the activities of the United Nations ystem in the Earthwatch programme. ACC considered that in 1980 priority should be given to thematic joint programming in Earthwatch.

E. THE SETTING UP BY THE REGIONAL COMMISSIONS OF INTER-GOVERNMENTAL REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEES

28. ACC noted that the Economic and Social Council had welcomed the decision of the Governing Council of UNEP, inviting the regional commissions to consider setting up intergovernmental regional environmental committees. Following consultations with the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation, the Executive Director of UNEP had written to the executive secretaries of the regional commissions stating that UNEP would be prepared to assist in any steps they envisaged to give effect to the decision, and suggesting that a useful starting point would be to review the relevant experience of ECE. Accordingly, the Executive Director of UNEP had proposed that a workshop meeting be held in conjunction with the next session of the Senior Advisers to ECE Governments on Environmental Problems, and had indicated UNEP's readiness to support the participation of staff from the regional commissions in the workshop.

29. ACC welcomed the steps being taken to give effect to the Governing Council's decision, and asked to be kept informed of progress.

F. DEVELOPMENT OF GUIDELINES ON ASSESSING AND MINIMIZING THE POSSIBLE ADVERSE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

30. ACC noted with satisfaction the progress made at a meeting convened by UNEP and co-sponsored by the World Bank (host) and UNDP, which had brought together nine development assistance institutions - the Asian Development Bank, the African Development Bank, the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa, the Caribbean Bank, the European Development Fund, the Organization of American States, the Inter-American Development Bank, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank - to prepare

a declaration of environmental policies and procedures relating to economic development. The meeting agreed on a draft declaration which was expected to be signed by the heads of the participating institutions prior to the special session of the General Assembly in 1980. The declaration reaffirmed their support for the principles and recommendations for action of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. It further stated that they would, to the best of their abilities, institute procedures for the systematic environmental examination of all development activities under consideration.

G. ASSUMPTION BY CO-OPERATING AGENCIES OF FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROJECTS COMMENCED WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FUND

31. ACC took note of Governing Council decision 7/1 of 3 May 1979, section V, paragraphs 2 and 3, regarding the catalytic role of the Fund, and of the request of the Executive Director to review projects which had been supported by the Fund for four years with a view to ensuring that, as appropriate and when feasible, the financial support of UNEP for those activities that tended to involve the Fund on a long-term basis was gradually phased out (decision 7/3, para. 6). While generally agreeing that the limited resources available to the Fund should not be frozen indefinitely in projects of long duration, ACC felt, however, that undue optimism as to the ability of agencies to make rapid adjustments of programme priorities sometimes involving sizeable changes in programme budgets should be avoided. The general situation would also be eased by a further concentration of the overall programme. Furthermore, UNEP's commitments, both intellectual and financial, to some important programmes of the agencies such as the World Climate Programme, might require prolonged support. ACC noted that the Executive Director, taking account of the above comments, would consult with the co-operating agencies concerned in regard to the implementation of Governing Council's decision 7/3. ACC agreed that the Council's decision would be particularly useful in the careful development of new co-operative activities, which would have to take due account of its provisions, and that the forward planning required for the eventual transfer of full responsibility to the agencies concerned would be made easier by system-wide medium-term planning and the consequential changes in budgetary procedures.

H. THE USE OF NON-CONVERTIBLE CURRENCIES OF THE ENVIRONMENT FUND

32. ACC noted that significant steps had already been taken by UNEP to make effective use of contributions pledged in non-convertible currencies. It felt that the co-operating agencies could extend their support to those efforts and that a valid approach would be to involve the agencies both on a continuous basis and in a mission which would review with the Government authorities concerned the programming of activities which could use non-convertible currencies.

I. CO-ORDINATION AND FOLLOW-UP OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN OF ACTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

1. Global level

33. ACC took note with satisfaction of decisions 7/13 A, B and C of the UNEP Governing Council regarding action to combat desertification, and in particular paragraph 3 of decision 7/13 B, whereby the Council endorsed the proposed role of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Desertification; the Group was performing that role, and its second meeting was held at Geneva on 17 September 1979.

34. The meeting discussed matters related to the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification of interest to the individual organizations and bodies of the United Nations system and to the system as a whole, on the basis of a draft report on activities within the United Nations system in regard to the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification.

35. The draft report, based on information provided by individual members of ACC, constituted a first attempt at reflecting the relationship between the members' activities and each of the recommendations of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification. Those agencies which had not so far been in a position to provide full information on their activities were invited to do so as soon as possible in order to obtain a comprehensive document which would give a complete picture of the anti-desertification efforts and activities of the United Nations system and would serve as a tool for decision-making within the system with regard to selection of future areas of engagement. More specifically, it was noted that agencies, in line with their previous commitment to put 24 man-months of professional staff services at the disposal of the Desertification Unit, would provide six man-months of service to be utilized for an overall redrafting and an in-depth analysis of the report. The modalities of those services would be worked out at a later stage, but it was stressed that agencies would not be required to assign full-time staff to UNEP for extended periods. It was also felt that before the development of any new information system regarding desertification was embarked upon, the views of IOB regarding the utility and feasibility of such a system should be obtained.

36. A preliminary analysis of the draft report identified the following trends in the on-going and planned activities of the United Nations towards the full implementation of the recommendations of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification:

(a) A major emphasis appeared to have been put on anti-desertification corrective measures, particularly in the arid and semi-arid regions of Africa and to a lesser degree in the similar regions of South-West Asia and Latin America. Those measures generally related to management of arid and semi-arid ecosystems;

(b) While it was recognized that a number of projects and programmes of assistance in favour of countries faced with desertification problems were not conceived as anti-desertification measures per se, many of them could be brought to serve that objective. However, an effort would have to be made to redesign or re-orientate them in such a manner that not only socio-economic considerations, but also the environmental consequences of their implementation, were given full attention. That effort would be facilitated by increasing the activities on assessment of desertification, especially at country level, which appeared to have been given relatively little attention. While the recommendations of the Plan of Action concerning assessment were partially followed in the African region, that was not always the case in other arid and semi-arid regions of the world;

(c) More emphasis ought to be placed on those aspects of the Plan of Action which related to cultural conditions, socio-economic incentives and other factors relating to active participation of the population groups living in areas with desertification problems;

(d) In line with the recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development, additional efforts should be made to strengthen national capacities in science and technology, with particular attention to assisting developing nations towards better planning and management of their soil resources;

(e) In the planning and execution of desertification control programmes and plans, extensive use should be made of technical co-operation among developing countries, especially countries with experience in combating desertification;

(f) There was a need for more substantial implementation of the recommendation of the United Nations Conference on Desertification concerning the combination of industrialization and urbanization with the development of agriculture, with a view to improving the agricultural production in arid areas;

(g) Not enough attention had been given to drought loss management, and in particular to preventive and protective strategies for minimizing the risks and combating the effects of drought. Those issues had previously been raised in the context of the United Nations Water Conference;

(h) Integration of anti-desertification measures into comprehensive development schemes was not presently being given sufficiently high priority in the design and implementation of activities and programmes undertaken in countries affected or likely to be affected by desertification.

37. ACC noted the information on the ongoing programming and planning activities of ECWA for Western Asia, of UNSO for 13 countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region, and of the Desertification Unit of UNEP for 11 least developed countries of Southern and East Africa and West and South Asia. ACC also noted the particular attention paid, in conformity with

General Assembly resolution 32/169 of 19 December 1977, to least developed countries, which UNEP was assisting in the preparation of national mechanisms and plans of action to combat desertification.

38. Financing was a major constraint on the overall implementation of the recommendations of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, and additional funds and means of financing were required within the United Nations system in order to allow for a more comprehensive response by the system to the 28 recommendations adopted by the Desertification Conference. ACC noted with satisfaction, however, that the Consultative Group for Desertification Control, which was recognized as a major vehicle for assisting in mobilizing funds, would have its second meeting early in 1980. ACC also took note of the opening of the Special Account by the Secretary-General on 15 March 1979, and of the study on additional measures and means of financing for the implementation of the Plan of Action which the Secretary-General had sent to Governments for comments.

39. ACC recognized that high priority should be given, within each of the United Nations agencies and bodies concerned, to activities which would complement the present implementation of the Plan of Action by the United Nations system, as well as to the financial support for such activities.

2. The Sudano-Sahelian region

40. In conformity with General Assembly resolution 33/88 of 15 December 1978 collaborative arrangements had been established between UNEP and UNDP to provide support, both institutional and financial, to UNSO in the discharge of its additional responsibilities. The Governments concerned have been informed of the agreed modalities and the additional mandate of UNSO. In order to reflect more accurately the geographical scope of its desertification control mandate, the name of UNSO had been changed to the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO).

41. In carrying out its role as the focal point and co-ordinating body of United Nations desertification control activities in the region, UNSO had established the necessary contacts with the organs concerned of the United Nations system, and modalities had been agreed upon for a concerted and co-ordinated effort.

42. In that connexion, UNSO had held a meeting in Dakar from 30 May to 1 June 1979 with the UNDP resident representatives of the countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region and representatives of the other relevant member organizations of the United Nations system. Representatives of the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) also attended. The meeting had emphasized the importance of the need for urgent and co-ordinated action from all parties concerned to support and intensify the efforts of Governments to deal with the grave problem of desertification with its long-term implications. In addition, it highlighted the importance of adopting approaches that were innovative

in nature and the application of existing knowledge, based on successful experience in the region and other regions, through technical co-operation among developing countries.

43. ACC noted that between March and June 1979 UNSO had organized and conducted planning and programming missions to 13 countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region, with the active assistance of the competent agencies of the United Nations system. Those missions, working closely with the relevant Government services, had investigated the problems of desertification in the countries, assessed on-going activities related to the recommendations of the United Nations Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, and identified priority projects and programmes for which UNSO assistance might be requested, with emphasis on the projects which fell within the two transnational concepts of management of livestock in arid regions and establishment of green belts. The mission reports and project data sheets had been submitted to and were being reviewed by the agencies concerned. Parallel to its planning and programme work, UNSO had already initiated its resource mobilization efforts and had helped raise funds for two desertification control projects in the Sudano-Sahelian region.

3. Principal obstacles to the full implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification

44. ACC considered the following factors to be the major constraints:

(a) Governments of countries faced with desertification problems or risks, while confronted with conflicting demands and scarce financial and human resources, appeared unable at present to assign sufficiently high priority to desertification prevention or control, and had only to a limited degree included such measures in their national development plans;

(b) There was a need to strenthen co-operation within the United Nations system, so as to ensure the proper multidisciplinary approach to projects and to arrange for effective pooling of the efforts and resources of various agencies and bodies, with a view to the most efficient utilization, in as many as possible of the geographical areas and subject matters concerned with desertification;

(c) Although there was a wealth of known technology in the area of desertification control, there was still a need to fill gaps in that knowledge, particularly as regards integrated inter-disciplinary approaches, including socio-cultural dimensions, and efforts towards teaching the existing knowledge to potential utilizers were far from sufficient, particularly at the level of extension agents and farmers/pastoralists;

(d) Insufficient financing was seriously limiting the efforts of the United Nations system to implement the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification. There was an urgent need for external sources of financing to increase their assistance to anti-desertification projects. The United Nations Conference on Desertification had estimated that resources of the order of $400 million annually, in addition to current

development assistance, would be needed to halt desertification. Funds of such magnitude had not as yet been forthcoming.

4. Reporting to the UNEP Governing Council and the General Assembly on the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification

45. ACC requested the Executive Director of UNEP to ask UNSO to update the relevant part of the report in an annex covering its anti-desertification activities in the Sudano-Sahelian region during the period August 1979 - January 1980, with a view to having before the UNEP Governing Council at its eighth session the most recent available information concerning the region.

46. ACC requested the Executive Director of UNEP to use the contribution of the agencies to the report on activities within the United Nations system in regard to the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification to assist, on behalf of ACC, in the detailed report which the Governing Council would submit to the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session.

REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON CO-ORDINATION TO THE GOVERNING COUNCIL OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME AT ITS EIGHTH SESSION

Appendix

SUMMARY ACCOUNT OF THE THEMATIC JOINT PROGRAMMING MEETINGS

A. Working environment

As foreseen in the report of ACC to the Governing Council of UNEP at its seventh session (UNEP/GC.7/5, para. 8), UNEP organized a thematic joint programming exercise on the working environment. The meeting, held at Vienna from 9 to 12 October 1979 at the kind invitation of UNIDO, was chaired by the Director of the Industry and Environment Office of UNEP, and was attended by representatives of ECE, UNEP, UNIDO, UNDP, ILO, WHO and IAEA.

The exercise had been preceded by two preparatory inter-agency consultative meetings in 1978. At the request of the Executive Director, ILO had assumed the responsibility for the preparation of the working document for the meeting, in consultation with the agencies and organizations concerned, particularly with WHO. The document was thoroughly examined, and adopted in its revised form. It contains a definition of the concept of the working environment; an overview of the relevant mandates, activities, and workplans (to 1980-1981) of the organizations of the United Nations system; objectives, strategies and concentration areas for a co-ordinated programme of action; and a chapter on programme co-ordination and co-operation.

The report of the meeting, with the above document annexed to it, will be brought to the attention of the Governing Body of ILO for its information, and in order to obtain the views of employers and workers in line with the provisions of UNEP Governing Council decision 87 B (V).

It was recommended that the joint programming meeting be reconvened in 1980 to review the workplans in the light of the agreed objectives and strategies, to extend the planning period to include the biennium 1982-1983, and to specify priorities.

B. Living marine resources, genetic resources, wildlife and protected areas and marine pollution

As foreseen in the report of ACC to the Governing Council of UNEP at its seventh session (UNEP/GC.7/5, para. 8), UNEP organized thematic joint programming exercises on living marine resources, genetic resources and wildlife and protected areas in Rome from 15 to 19 October 1979. The subject of marine pollution had been dealt with at the time of the second inter-agency meeting on regional seas, held at Rome from 23 to 25 July 1979.

The October meeting, which was held at the kind invitation of FAO, was chaired by UNEP's Assistant Executive Director for Programme and attended by representatives of ECE, FAO, UNEP, UNESCO, WMO and IUCN. Working papers prepared by UNEP for each subject, as well as the sample UNEP medium-term plan document for 1980-1983, provided the framework for the discussions.

The Chairman recalled in his introductory statement that thematic joint programming was linked to in-depth presentations to the Governing Council of UNEP and would also constitute a basis for developing the system-wide medium-term plan document for 1980-1983, provided the framework for the discussions.

The Chairman recalled in his introductory statement that thematic joint programming was linked to in-depth presentations to the Governing Council of UNEP and would also constitute a basis for developing the system-wide medium-term environment programme expected to be before the Governing Council at its tenth session in 1982.

The meeting agreed to place emphasis on proposed objectives and strategies, urgent needs and joint activities. It was further agreed that the resulting exchange of views would not necessarily commit the organizations, as each subject would be further reviewed during the consideration of the draft programme document by the meeting of the designated officials for environmental matters to be held at Nairobi in December 1979.

1. Living marine resources

The meeting agreed to retain the formulation of the overall objective as approved by the Governing Council: to maintain the productivity and health of marine ecosystems and their populations of plants and animals at, or restore them to, optimum levels. The meeting also reviewed and agreed on the structure of the sub-programmes in the sample medium-term plan and on the time-bound objectives with amendments which are reflected in the revised sample medium-term plan. Comments on the proposed joint activities are reflected in the programme document (UNEP/GC.8/5) while those relating directly to the in-depth report are reflected in the revised report.

2. Genetic resources

The meeting reviewed the sub-programmes on crop plant genetic resources, forest genetic resources, animal genetic resources, fish genetic resources and microbial genetic resources, and reaffirmed goal 8 for 1982 "A global network of microbiology resources centres to conserve microbiological resources and apply them in environmental management". It also reviewed the objectives and strategies and the proposed joint activities; the results of this review are reflected in the programme document as well as the sample medium-term plan and the revised in-depth report.

3. Wildlife and protected areas

The meeting briefly reviewed the documentation on this topic and decided to work on the basis of the revised chapter VI of the in-depth report, which presented issues clearly, and of the sample medium-term plan, particularly the sections on planned activities. The meeting felt that the in-depth report needed more work to improve both substance and presentation.

The meeting exchanged views on the structure of the sub-programmes as formulated in the sample medium-term plan 1980-1983, on urgent needs, objectives and strategies, on goal 9 for 1982 and on planned activities. Regarding the structure, the meeting agreed that, while another sub-programme on research and monitoring could be added, consideration could also be given to including activities on research and monitoring under the existing sub-programmes. It was agreed that the urgent needs required sharpening, and that goal 9 could be reformulated to reflect the fact that part of it was substantially implemented.

It was stated that the World Conservation Strategy affected many areas of the environment programme, and should therefore be appropriately introduced into the programme documentation. The need for implementation of the Strategy by the concerned bodies and Governments was emphasized.

The results of the review on the above aspects are reflected in the programme document, the sample medium-term plan and the revised in-depth report.

4. Marine pollution

The thematic joint programming on marine pollution was carried out during the Second Inter-Agency Meeting on Regional Seas. The meeting, which was held at Rome at the kind invitation of FAO, was chaired by the Director of the Regional Seas Programme Activity Centre and was attended by representatives of the United Nations Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, ECA, ECLA, FAO, IAEA, IMCO, UNESCO, IOC of UNESCO, UNIDO, UNDP, UNEP, WHO, WTO, and IUCN.

The meeting discussed the relation of the regional seas programme to global ocean pollution programmes. UNEP's approach to the problem of global and open ocean pollution, that activities should be built on existing programmes and in particular derive strength from the regional seas programme, was noted.

The meeting agreed that foreseen activities would deal with the presence, levels and effects of pollutants in the open ocean, with emphasis on:

(a) Development of methods for monitoring and intercalibration of available methods in close co-operation with ICES;

(b) Assessment of trends of pollutants at the regional level through the regional seas programme and the global level through GESAMP's "health of the oceans" project.

II

OTHER CO-ORDINATION QUESTIONS

Report of the Executive Director

A. THE SYSTEM-WIDE MEDIUM-TERM ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

1. At its nineteenth session, in May 1979, the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) held a major discussion on the process of programme planning in the United Nations. The Committee agreed that the programme planning process should be based on the following principles: 1/

> "(a) The planning process, which is a part of the overall management process, should be forward looking and dynamic. The medium-term plan should not be formulated primarily on the basis of projection of the past and present into the future, as has been the practice so far, but it should be deductive and its strategy and orientation as well as its specific goals and activities and policy orientations set by the intergovernmental organs;
>
> ...
>
> "(f) While it may be desirable to lengthen the planning cycle to ensure continuity, it will be necessary to achieve flexibility through reviews by intergovernmental organs as detailed as required to incorporate the programme implications of the resolutions adopted by intergovernmental organs and international conferences since the adoption of the plan;
>
> "(g) There should be full involvement of intergovernmental organs in the formulation, consideration, review and evaluation of the plan during the regular cycle of their meetings. The effective participation of the central as well as sectoral, regional and functional bodies would require a longer preparation cycle for the plan and a greater co-ordination in their calendar of meetings than at present;
>
> "(h) The introduction to the medium-term plan should constitute a key integral element in the planning process. It should highlight objectives and policy orientations of the United Nations system and indicate trends as deduced from the legislative mandates which reflect the priorities set by the intergovernmental organs;

1/ Report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination on the work of its nineteenth session, Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 38 (A 34/38), para. 71.

"(i) In the medium-term plan, the emphasis should be on description of objectives and strategy; the presentation and format of the analysis should vary according to the type and nature of activities;

"(j) The programme budget should be formulated within the framework of the medium-term plan, keeping in view its objectives and strategy;

"(k) There is a need to vary information density in relation to the time horizon as well as according to the information needs of the reviewing bodies;

"(l) The planning process should take into account the need for joint planning, programme co-ordination and harmonization within the United Nations system. The Committee, however, could not agree that total synchronization of planning periods is thereby necessarily required. Co-ordination is not an end in itself; its aim should be to maximize the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the system;

"(m) Performance reporting and evaluation are key elements in the planning, programming, monitoring and evaluation cycle; the evaluation mechanism should be strengthened; the ongoing process of development and improving planning methods includes the refinement of evaluation techniques. The use of achievement indicators as a tool for evaluation should be developed.".

2. The Committee also made (para. 72 of its report) a number of recommendations to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, which were subsequently accepted, regarding the manner in which the planning process should be scheduled, organized and conducted in the future. These were:

"(a) The medium-term plan should cover a period of six years. The Committee did not reach agreement as to whether the plan should roll or have a fixed horizon. The plan should, however, be brought up to date, as appropriate, no later than the end of the second year of its implementation;

"(b) The next proposed medium-term plan to be submitted should cover the period 1984-1989, and accordingly the submission of a 1982-1985 proposed medium-term plan currently scheduled for 1980 is no longer required;

"(c) The current medium-term plan should be reviewed at an appropriate time to take account of all decisions with programme implications during the first biennium;

"(d) The plan should clearly identify new activities, and the planning process should identify completed and obsolete activities;

"(e) The emphasis in the plan narrative should be on the objectives and strategy. Objectives should be time-limited as far as possible and the plan structure should be objective-based in all programmes where it is feasible;

"(f) Financial indications should be shown in the plan along the lines recommended by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/33/345, paras. 7-11).".

3. The Committee is to resume consideration of the planning process at its twentieth session, in May 1980.

4. In his recommendations on the system-wide programme, made to the Governing Council at its seventh session, the Executive Director had considered that there should be two stages in the development of the system-wide medium-term environment programme (SWMTEP), the first linked to the preparations of the environment programme chapter in the United Nations medium-term plan for 1982-1985 and the second linked to the preparations of the system-wide programme itself, to go into effect on 1 January 1984.

5. Now that the General Assembly has accepted the CPC recommendations and has thus decided that the next United Nations medium-term plan will commence on 1 January 1984 for a duration of six years, thus coinciding with other major medium-term plans in the United Nations system, the Executive Director reiterates his proposal of the same starting date and duration for SWMTEP. However, UNEP cannot go on without a "Fund medium-term plan" for the period 1982-1983, nor can it, after the decisions of the General Assembly, continue with a misnomer for such a plan (see UNEP/GC.7/6, para. 31). Added to this is the fact that the Governing Council has to base itself on a proper programme budgeting presentation for 1982-1983, in order to decide in 1981 on the level of funding for those two years. Such an exercise would also be a useful experimental phase for the preparation of SWMTEP and the environment chapter in the United Nations medium-term plan 1984-1989. The Executive Director thus intends to present a medium-term programme document for the period 1980-1983 to the Governing Council at its ninth session. It will be based on what was actually approved by the Governing Council for 1980-1981, and will endeavour to apply as far as possible the recommendations of CPC accepted by the General Assembly for 1982-1983.

6. Delegations to the Governing Council at its seventh session agreed with the Executive Director's recommendation (UNEP/GC.7/6, para. 22) that there should be a convergence between the programming processes of UNEP and of the United Nations itself. The UNEP programming process needs to follow the principles of the United Nations process, but goes further in that UNEP's process is meant to prepare a programme for the United Nations system as a whole, and not just a chapter proposing UNEP activities as part of the United Nations medium-term plan. The system-wide programme is thus seen as broader than the environment chapter in the United Nations medium-term plan. This arrangement appears to point the way to two

separate presentations, SWMTEP for the Governing Council and the environment chapter of the United Nations medium-term plan for CPC. However, it should be always borne in mind that the UNEP activities to be reflected in the United Nations medium-term plan cannot be clearly understood outside the context of SWMTEP, and a final decision on the question of presentation should await further developments.

7. In document UNEP/GC.7/6, the Executive Director envisaged that the environment programme would appear as a major programme in the United Nations medium-term plan, with constituent programmes and sub-programmes. Consonant with the principle of convergence, it was envisaged that SWMTEP would be similarly structured, and that to the extent possible a methodology compatible with that to be employed in the United Nations medium-term plan would be applied in SWMTEP. Such a methodology was described in general terms in UNEP/GC.7/6, paragraphs 19-26.

8. In the period since the seventh session of the Governing Council, the Executive Director, taking account of developments in CPC and the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) contained in the report by Inspector Bertrand on programming and evaluation in the United Nations system (E/1978/41), has endeavoured further to develop the methodology and to apply it to a few sample programmes. A sample is available to the Governing Council as document UNEP/GC.8/INF. 3.

9. The methodology employed in the sample has been the subject of consultations with Inspector Bertrand of JIU, with ACC, and at the intersessional informal consultations held at Nairobi (10-14 December 1979). While finding the methodology satisfactory, Mr. Bertrand has invited attention to the desirability of providing, at the level of each programme, an examination of the reasons which led to the choice of a particular strategy and particular sub-programmes. The Executive Director therefore proposes to introduce into the intersessional documentation a series entitled "Over-all strategy and approach" which will cover each programme. Mr. Bertrand has also recognized that the requirements of system-wide co-ordination require a greater degree of detail in SWMTEP, particularly on the financial side, than are needed by the United Nations medium-term planning methodology.

10. Sample documents were discussed at length during the informal consultations with Governments in December 1979, and there was general agreement on the difficulty of discussing form without touching on substance. A number of procedural aspects relative to the current samples were also discussed and to the degree possible taken into account in the current programme document (UNEP/GC.8/5).

11. In its report to the Governing Council (part I of the present document) ACC has considered that the methodology employed was entirely conducive to the further development of thematic joint programming, which should be the basis for the preparation of SWMTEP. Reiterating its willingness to co-operate closely with UNEP in the development of SWMTEP, ACC agreed that, following consideration by the Governing Council of the

sample presentations, guidelines would need to be drafted which would provide a basis for the detailed contributions of the organizations to SWMTEP.

12. The Executive Director fully supports the recommendations of ACC; and following consideration of the samples by the Governing Council, he will set in train the preparation of the detailed guidelines referred to above.

13. As agreed at the ACC meeting, the Executive Director intends that SWMTEP will be prepared in full consultation with the concerned organizations of the United Nations system. Following the preparation of the guidelines, an intensive period of consultations with these organizations will be required, with a view to identifying the objectives to be set at the programme level for the period 1984-1989, the choice of strategies and sub-programmes needed to reach those objectives, and the identification also of the organizations which would work together to reach each objective. Thematic joint programming with the organizations concerned should result in the preparation of chapters of SWMTEP, the whole are expected to be considered by Governing Council in 1982.

14. In document UNEP/GC.7/6, the Executive Director pointed out the discrepancy between the usage of the term "medium-term plan" in the Fund procedures and the usage sanctioned by the General Assembly itself, and stated that appropriate changes in the Fund procedures would be proposed to the Governing Council at its eighth session. Such proposals are presented in document UNEP/GC.8/7, part I.

15. In his introductory report to the Governing Council at its seventh session, the Executive Director suggested that a programme perspective document should be presented to provide a context for the medium-term programme. An experimental version of a chapter of such a document has been made available to the present session of the Governing Council (UNEP/GC.8/INF. 2), and will be further developed in the light of opinions expressed at the session. This sample has also been the subject of intensive discussions at the intersessional informal consultations in December 1979. The perspective document will be presented to the Governing Council at its ninth session.

16. The programme documentation to be presented to the Governing Council at its ninth session will thus consist of three documents:

(a) The programme perspective;

(b) The medium-term programme (1980-1983);

(c) The programme performance document (the present programme document with emphasis on progress in the implementation of the programme).

17. The system-wide medium-term environment programme uses a methodology which seeks to provide an effective approach to the planning, programming, budgeting and evaluation processes.

18. While the Governing Council has focussed its attention in past years on the evaluation of projects and clusters of projects, matters which are the subject of document UNEP/GC.8/7, part III, the Council may also wish to consider the issue of evaluation in terms of the total effectiveness of the environment programme and of the actions by Governments and peoples in regard to the objectives for the environment which the programme is meant to foster. The Executive Director would welcome the advice of the Council in regard to this type of evaluation.

19. The different levels of evaluation require a hierarchy of objectives which would graduate from the very precise objectives developed for projects to the rather general; the greatest level of generality being the objectives "to safeguard and enhance the environment for the benefit of present and future generations of man" (General Assembly resolution 2297 (XXVII)). The purpose of evaluation should be linked not only to the purpose which the objectives were meant to achieve but also to the determination of whether the objectives themselves had proved relevant to changing environmental conditions and had, in the first place, been rightly set.

20. The system-wide medium-term environment programme is intended to provide an effective vehicle for the evaluation of the efforts of the United Nations system, and also of the effectiveness of the use of the resources of the Environment Fund in its catalytic and co-ordinating functions. It does this by providing for precise time-limited objectives at the sub-programme level, with associated achievement indicators. The activities required to achieve these objectives are presented, with an indication of the resources to be provided, including those from the Fund.

21. At the next level of the hierarchy, objectives are set at the programme level, and making it possible to evaluate how far the objectives at the sub-programme level have in fact contributed to the achievement of the over-all objectives at the programme level, and providing a measure of the correctness with which the objectives at the sub-programme level were framed.

22. The evaluation of the results of the SWMTEP at the hierarchical levels of sub-programme and programmes will add up to an evaluation of over-all efforts of the United Nations system to protect and improve the human environment. In this context, it should be noted that a programme performance report is to be prepared in detailed form every two years, and this will serve the needs of both the Governing Council and the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination in their periodic reviews of progress.

23. The evaluation by the Governing Council of the efforts of the entire world community in terms of their effectiveness in regard to environmental concerns is clearly a more difficult exercise, and will take place at a greater level of generality. The objectives put forward in the programme perspective document should provide the basis for such evaluations, which should be linked to the results of environmental assessment, including the results of the Global Environmental Monitoring System. The measure of effectiveness can only be seen in terms of a qualitative and quantitative understanding of the way in which the environment has changed in the period to which the evaluation refers.

B. CO-ORDINATION WITH THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

24. In its resolution 32/162 of 19 December 1977, the General Assembly urged, inter alia, that the Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) and the bureau of the Commission on Human Settlements should meet biannually with the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme and the bureau of its Governing Council to review together their respective priorities and programmes for improving human settlements and to strengthen and extend co-operation between the two organizations. In compliance with this resolution, the two bureaux held their second joint meeting, together with the Executive Director of UNCHS (Habitat) and the Executive Director of UNEP, at Nairobi, on 7 December 1979. 2/

25. Members of the bureau of the Commission on Human Settlements, as well as members of the bureau of the Governing Council of UNEP, attended the joint meeting, together with the Executive Director of UNCHS (Habitat) and by the Executive Director of UNEP.

26. The joint meeting had before it a discussion paper, prepared jointly by the secretariats of UNCHS (Habitat) and UNEP, on co-operation between them and review of their respective priorities and programmes. 3/

27. The joint meeting welcomed the steps and procedures for co-operation that had been instituted by the two Executive Directors subsequent to the first joint meeting. It noted with satisfaction that there were no major policy differences between the two organizations, and reiterated the view, expressed at the first joint meeting, that the two Executive Directors should continue to proceed on the basis of mutual co-operation and collaboration, rather than try to establish rigid demarcation lines between their respective organizations.

2/ A report on the first joint meeting, held at Nairobi, Kenya, on 5 and 6 March 1979, was submitted to the Council at its seventh session in document UNEP/GC.7/11.

3/ The discussion paper for the joint meeting will be made available on request to delegations to the Governing Council at its eighth session.

28. The joint meeting welcomed the identification by the two secretariats of the following major areas in their respective work programmes in which future activities would be developed in close mutual co-operation and in co-operation with other United Nations bodies:

(a) Settlement planning in relation to population and environmental policies;

(b) Support and promotion of research and training in settlement planning (regional and national studies);

(c) Systems approach to rural settlements planning;

(d) Global review of human settlements;

(e) Energy requirements of rural settlements and urban poor and energy conservation in buildings;

(f) Assessment of environmental conditions in human settlements;

(g) Environmental aspects of planning and development of human settlements;

(h) Environmentally sound and appropriate human settlements technologies;

(i) Research, training and dissemination of information of the environmental aspects of human settlements.

29. The joint meeting endorsed the proposals by the two secretariats for future co-operative efforts and joint activities in other subject areas of the environment programme such as: outer limits and the assessment of basic human needs; environmental data; environmentally sound and appropriate technologies; environmental management; industry and the environment; environmental education and training; and, with particular emphasis, the area of environment and development. In that connexion, the meeting requested that special attention be given to the dissemination of the experiences and knowledge gained, particularly in the form of clear and simple guidelines.

30. The meeting stressed the need for assistance to Governments in helping them to identify and formulate project proposals in the area of environmental aspects of human settlements planning and expressed the hope that continued consultations between the two secretariats would lead to the identification of new activities in this area.

31. The meeting decided that a recommendation should be made to the General Assembly, through the governing bodies of the two organizations, that in future the joint bureaux meetings be held on an annual, rather than biennual, basis.

C. CO-OPERATION WITH THE REGIONAL COMMISSIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS

32. At the time of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, 1972, only one regional commission of the United Nations, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), had in its secretariat a Division which was directly responsible for Human Settlements and Environment. UNEP strengthened the Division by the provision of additional staff services in 1973, thus helping to make maximum use of all available experience and developments in the region in the field of environmental protection and improvement and assisting in disseminating relevant information to other regions of the world and in developing a balanced programme, taking into account the concerns of both developed and developing countries.

33. In the light of the growing role being played by the regional commissions in the field of the environment, the Governing Council in 1977 welcomed (decision 82 (V), sect. III, para. 3) the progress made in strengthening the links between the programme of UNEP and the regional commissions and stressed the importance of further developing regional co-operation in environmental activities. The UNEP secretariat accordingly supported the establishment of Environmental Co-ordination Units in the four Commissions other than ECE with the aim of co-ordinating and stimulating the Commission's environmental activities. These units started becoming operational in 1978, providing for two or three professionals in each Unit working under the Executive Secretary's supervision. UNEP support was initially provided for two years. This support will be reviewed with the commissions in due course.

34. At its seventh session, the Council, by decision 7/1, section II, paragraph 10, invited the attention of the regional commissions to the advantages of setting up intergovernmental regional environmental committees. This decision was welcomed by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1979/56. The Executive Director has consulted with the Director General for Development and International Economic Co-operation and the executive secretaries of the regional commissions on this matter. He is organizing a meeting on the subject with representatives of the regional commissions in Geneva in February 1980, at the time of a meeting of the Senior Advisers on Environmental Problems of ECE, in the belief that much can be learned from the experience of that body, which is the only operating intergovernmental committee dealing with environmental matters in the regional commissions.