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Items 4 and 6 of the provisional agenda*

Assessment, monitoring and early warning: state of the environment

**Follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development: contribution
of the United Nations Environment Programme to the forthcoming
session of the Commission on Sustainable Development**

Key policy issues for the environmental aspects of water

Note by the Executive Director

The Executive Director has the honour to provide the annex to the present note, which has been prepared in response to Governing Council decision 22/2, paragraph 9, by which the Council decided “to review the UNEP Water Policy and Strategy at the twenty-third session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum and that, for this purpose, the Executive Director should prepare an updated version of the Water Policy and Strategy, based on the key policy issues for the environmental aspects of water, identified in the decision and arising from the activities undertaken by UNEP and in keeping with the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development”. The annex, therefore, presents the key policy issues, developments and processes which were taken into account in updating the UNEP Water Policy and Strategy and renewing the Programme for the Environmentally Sound Management of Freshwater, as contained in document UNEP/GC.23/3/Add.5. The annex is being circulated without formal editing.

* UNEP/GC.23/1.

Annex

INTRODUCTION

1. In response to the key environmental water issues, the international community has taken up the issue of water at several international conferences and has identified critical actions to address the existing and emerging problems. At its twenty-second session, the UNEP Governing Council also took up water issues. The documentation provided at that session, namely documents UNEP/GC.22/10/Add.3/Rev.1 (Implementing the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development: Water), UNEP/GC.22/2/Add.3 (Review of the water policy and strategy of UNEP: Key policy issues and policy options) and UNEP/GC.22/INF/35 (Measures for strengthening the freshwater component of the Water Policy and Strategy) and the ensuing deliberations have contributed to formulating the UNEP response to the water-related topics of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and to the elaboration of the present paper.
2. Key recommendations emanating from the following major international meetings need to be taken into account in updating of the UNEP Water Policy and Strategy. The Millennium General Assembly; the First Intergovernmental Review Meeting on the Implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (November 2001); the Bonn International Conference on Freshwater (December 2001); the Monterrey Conference (March 2002); the World Summit on Sustainable Development (August 2002); the Twenty-second session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (February 2003); the Third World Water Forum (March 2003); the eleventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (April to May 2003); the G-8 Summit (June 2003); the Dushanbe International Fresh Water Forum (September 2003); the Stavanger Conference (November 2003); the Pan-African Implementation and Partnership Conference on Water (December 2003); and the forthcoming international meeting to review the Barbados Plan of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, to be held in Mauritius later this year (2004).
3. The third Global Environment Outlook (GEO) report, produced within the framework of the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 September 2002, identifies the quantity (water scarcity) and quality (pollution) aspects of water resources as among of the most critical issues requiring attention in the twenty-first century. Indeed, the quantity and quality of water influence human well-being in all its aspects: they have impacts, among other things, on ecosystem and human health, agricultural production, biodiversity, energy production, development, and the natural environment. In the light of the objectives of sustainable development, short-term sectoral management of groundwater, rivers, lakes, coastal areas and marine waters is no longer an option: increasingly, the urgent need to apply integrated and adaptive ecosystem-based approaches to the management of water, sanitation and human settlements is being recognized.
4. In its resolution 53/242 of 28 July 1999, the General Assembly established the Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF), which is the principal global forum of environment Ministers; its purpose is to review, at international, regional and national levels, important and emerging policy issues in the area of the environment. The 8th Special Session of the Governing Council was devoted to implementation review as well as the identification of policy measures needed to tackle the current water policy challenges. The session took place at a crucial juncture in the development of international environmental and sustainable development policies. The World Summit on Sustainable Development marked the beginning of a process that focused the sustainable development agenda on implementation, partnerships and coherent action on the ground. Implementation is the key imperative.
5. At its eighth Special Session the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environmental Forum conducted a review of the important and emerging environmental issues and subsequently submitted inputs to the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (April 2004). The United Nations Secretary-General presented to the Commission at its twelfth session a report on progress towards the implementation of the many commitments and targets of Agenda 21,¹ the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21,² and of the World Summit's Plan of Implementation,³ as they relate to the

¹ *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3–14 June 1992* (United Nations publication, Sales No.E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: *Resolutions adopted by the Conference*, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

three thematic clusters of water, sanitation and human settlements. The Secretary-General's report facilitated deliberations at the Commission's twelfth session on priority concerns, constraints and obstacles. It also identified workable approaches for expediting the implementation of the social, economic and environmental commitments relating to water, sanitation and human settlements.

6. The twenty-third session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (Nairobi, February 2005) will take place in the context of this heightened and growing international determination to tackle the water crisis. It is also against this background that the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum will be considering the Executive Director's response to Governing Council decision 22/2. What follows is a snapshot of key developments which have informed the updating of the UNEP Water Policy and Strategy as well as the Executive Director's responses to the Governing Council decision 22/2.

I. World Summit on Sustainable Development

7. The most concrete targets adopted at the WSSD relate to water:

- Develop integrated water resources management and water efficiency plans by 2005, with support to developing countries.
- Halve, by the year 2015, the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water (*reaffirmation of internationally agreed goals of the Millennium Declaration (MDG)*).
- Halve, by the year 2015, the proportion of people who do not have access to basic sanitation.

8. From UNEP's mandate and experience, which have strong focus on integrated approaches to water management, including river basin management, the 2005 target is the most immediately relevant.

9. The priority at the World Summit on Sustainable Development was poverty reduction and it also highlighted the natural resource-base of sustainable development. This implies that UNEP's support to developing countries for the implementation of the 2005 IWRM and Efficiency Plans target should include a focus on poverty reduction and the contribution of environmentally-sustainable water use to overall sustainable development.

10. Paragraph 25 of the Johannesburg Programme of Implementation is attached as Annex I. The items in this paragraph also indicate priority actions to be reflected in any UNEP programme to achieve environmentally sound water management, and in the 2005 IWRM and Efficiency Plans.

II. Eighth special session of the UNEP GC/GMEF-Jeju

11. In Jeju, Ministers adopted the Jeju Initiative, which reflected the CSD themes of (i) water, (ii) sanitation and (iii) human settlements. There was an important focus in Jeju on IWRM and ecosystem approaches.

12. The ministers and other heads of delegations emphasized the need for the international community and national Governments to make substantive progress towards implementing the IWRM target by 2005. They recognized that many countries have IWRM programmes in place or under development. They also recognized, however, that having full-fledged IWRM and Efficiency Plans by 2005 might not be feasible for all countries, particularly for countries with limited capacity. They made clear that IWRM should be tailored to specific national circumstances and that it was not appropriate to adopt a "one size fits all" approach. The implementation of IWRM plans is a long-term process. Progress in establishing or further developing the plans can be achieved by 2005 if the political will and necessary capacity and resources are in place.

² General Assembly resolution S/19-2, annex.

³ *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August–4 September 2002* (United Nations publication Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 2, annex.

13. The ministers and other heads of delegations recognized the following issues and elements for the successful addressing of environmental aspects of IWRM:

- Cross-sectoral management of water resources:
- National planning processes:
- Transboundary approaches:
- Ecosystem-based approach:
- Linking the principles and practice of IWRM with integrated coastal zone management:
- Institutional structures and governance:
- Economic instruments:
- Monitoring, assessment and reporting:
- Stakeholder involvement:
- Capacity-building and training:
- Sustainable technologies:

14. Following the consideration of IWRM, the Jeju meeting also addressed sanitation, highlighting the need for environmentally-sustainable approaches to achieving the sanitation targets.

15. The meeting also considered the links between water, poverty and human settlements, thus reflecting the need to address water and sanitation issues within the poverty reduction efforts.

16. In summary, Jeju highlighted the importance of IWRM and the 2005 targets, and served as a valuable input to CSD-12 – which carried out a policy implementation review. It also highlighted the links between environmentally-sustainable water management and achievement of sanitation, water supply and poverty reduction targets. However, it also indicated that much work remains to be done to achieve the water, sanitation and human settlement targets, as was confirmed at CSD-12.

III. Twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-12)

17. CSD-12 carried out a review of the status of implementation of the relevant Agenda 21 and WSSD and MDG targets applying to (i) water, (ii) sanitation and (iii) human settlements. These three themes are central to and underpin all the MDGs, and the opportunity for the CSD to address the lack of focus on environment and sustainable development in the MDGs could not be passed over.

18. CSD-12 also reaffirmed the WSSD's wisdom in placing the issue of poverty eradication at the center of the sustainable development agenda. The thrust of the debate has put the CSD in a good position to play a meaningful role in the UN's 2005 review of the implementation of the MDGs. Ministers emphasized that achieving the targets for water, sanitation and human settlements, and achieving the poverty eradication target, are inextricably linked and play a crucial role in sustaining economic growth.

19. CSD-12 concluded that, although many countries are not currently on track, the targets for water, sanitation and human settlements are achievable in the timeframe agreed. Achieving them, however, will require high level of political commitment and strengthened governance at all levels, as well as substantial efforts at mobilizing and effectively using resources.

IV. High-Level Segment of the Commission on Sustainable Development: Responding To Challenges: The Way Forward

20. Ministers identified a number of challenges that need to be addressed in the course of the policy year as an effective follow-up of CSD-12 consistent with the programme of work adopted at CSD-11, with

a view to strengthening implementation to meet the agreed goals and targets in the areas of water, sanitation and human settlements, including:

- (a) Mobilizing resources from all sources – international, regional, national and local, public and private – to meet the MDGs and JPOI goals and targets;
- (b) Including water, sanitation and human settlements in NSDSs and PRSPs, and ensuring that NSSD and PRSP processes are inclusive and nationally driven with proper monitoring;
- (c) Strengthening governance at all levels to ensure proper and efficient use of scarce resources;
- (d) Improving inter-agency cooperation and cross-sectoral coordination among international organizations in accordance with their mandates and JPOI, as well cross-sectoral cooperation and donor coordination at the national level contributing to JPOI implementation;
- (e) Enhancing the role of partnerships in mobilizing new and additional resources, and encouraging those that effectively contribute to meeting national needs;
- (f) Building capacity for water management, sanitation and human settlements planning and development in developing countries, with financial and technical assistance from developed countries and international organizations. Capacity building at the local level is particularly important in view of the trend toward decentralization of service provision;
- (g) Increasing the transfer of appropriate technologies and facilitating and enhancing scientific and technical cooperation;
- (h) Disseminating knowledge and experiences, particularly on low-cost and locally adaptable approaches and technologies, and scaling up successful experiences;
- (i) Strengthening monitoring, assessment and reporting mechanisms to improve decisionmaking and to enable measurement of progress toward targets, while recognizing the need to reduce the reporting burden;
- (j) Addressing the special needs of Africa, SIDS and land-locked developing countries;
- (k) Enhancing the roles and status of women, as participants and agents of change, and mainstreaming gender in planning, decision making and management;
- (l) Accelerating implementation of commitments to develop IWRM and water efficiency plans by 2005, addressing economic development, poverty reduction, environmental protection and sustainable consumption and production, including water efficiency in agriculture;
- (m) Increasing recognition of the importance of sanitation and hygiene to health, poverty reduction and other aspects of sustainable development as a basis for mobilizing public and private resources;
- (n) Addressing the major challenges to urban planning and land-use management posed by rapid urbanization, and ensuring the effective participation of local authorities and communities, including the women and the poor, in these processes;
- (o) Improving the conditions in informal settlements, including through linking them to the broader urban and national economies, creating employment opportunities and promoting entrepreneurship among the poor, in particular for women.

21. These challenges provide useful guidance for identifying areas for policy actions to propose to CSD-13, and for inclusion in the UNEP's freshwater, sanitation and human settlement activities, consistent with UNEP's mandate and comparative advantages.

V. Thirteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-13)

22. CSD-13 will focus on identifying policy actions to meet the challenges identified in CSD-12 in order to accelerate achievement of the WSSD and MDG targets in relation to water, sanitation and human settlements. There is no doubt that CSD-13 will come at a crucial juncture and that it is vital that CSD-13 results in concrete actions being implemented to achieve the targets.

23. The Bureau agreed that (i) CSD-13 should focus on deliverables and (ii) should mobilize further concrete and tangible action to expedite implementation. CSD-13 should not seek to redefine problems or challenges. The outcome of CSD-13 should support and expedite implementation, be action-orientated and be practical. In this sense, the idea of a framework of policy options and practical measures was explored.

24. Activities and projects which contribute to UNEP's preparatory work for CSD-13, and have assisted in preparing the water policy papers for GC23 include:

- The mid-term report on Montevideo-3, which takes into account the lack of progress in water legislation and policies. UNEP is finalizing a special publication on water legislation.
- The draft intergovernmental strategic plan on technology support and capacity building.
- Participation in a number of CSD-13 relevant events, including the International Conference on Global Water Assessment and Integrated Water Management, Sweden August 2004; Stockholm Water Week; and World Urban Forum, Spain, September 2004.

25. Other CSD-13 relevant meetings include the ten-year review of the SIDS programme of action; CSD-13 Preparatory meeting, February, 2004. CSD-13 itself will take place during 11-22 April 2005.

VI. Other Relevant Developments and Processes for Updating the UNEP Water Policy and Strategy and strengthening the freshwater component.

26. Details on the progress made and needed in the implementation of the UNEP water policy covering the period of February 2003 to January 2004 are found in separate documents before the session/forum. The key policy issues arising from the activities carried out under the different components of the Water Policy and Strategy have been appropriately taken into account in the updating foreseen by the Governing Council 22/2. These developments relate to:

Water Assessment

- Global International Waters Assessment (GIWA);
- GEMS/Water Quality Assessment;
- Ground Water Vulnerability Assessment;
- Other UNEP Water Assessments.

Water Management

- Global Programme of Action to Protect the Coastal and Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA);
- Regional Seas Programme
- Freshwater

Coordination

- UN Water;
- Global Water Partnership;
- 2005 Water Resources Alliance Initiative;
- Regional intergovernmental mechanisms and initiatives
- CSD-related processes, including the review of the status of IWRM implementation
- Environmental Management Group (EMG)

Other Relevant Developments relating to International Environmental Governance

- Process for the development of an Intergovernmental Strategic Plan (ISP) on technology support and capacity building. The ISP will strengthen the framework for capacity building in water policy, analysis and review in a number of areas, including within the scope of UNEP's Water Policy and Strategy.
 - The strengthening of UNEP's scientific base will assist not only the developing countries in obtaining policy-relevant environmental assessments, including water-related assessments, but also serve the broader quest for sustainable development through informed early warning analysis and the provision of policy-relevant information for responsible natural resource management.
 - Five-year review of the Millennium Declaration
 - The ongoing preparation of the above mentioned five-year review, particularly as it relates to the MDG water and sanitation target, is taken into account in updating UNEP's Water Policy and Strategy.
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