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RELATIONSHIPS WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Note by the Executive Director

1. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) continue to be active partners with UNEP in working toward the fulfilment of the goals set for 1982. The secretariat has given priority to pursuing increased co-operation with NGOs on both substantive and information matters.
2. In its work with NGOs, UNEP co-operates with other parts of the United Nations system, such as the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC), the Department of Public Information, the UNESCO Youth Section, those responsible for major events such as the United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development, and the NGO Service Centres.
3. Since the Governing Council's seventh session, a number of Governments have commented favourably on the usefulness to them of the report on NGO activities distributed at Governing Council sessions. The practice of reporting on NGOs' activities in areas under in-depth consideration by the Governing Council has therefore been continued. The report on NGO activities in the areas of tropical woodlands and forest ecosystems, mountain, island and other ecosystems, genetic resources, wildlife and protected areas, oceans - living marine resources and marine pollution, environmental training and Technical Assistance has been prepared by the Environment Liaison Centre.
4. The Conference of NGOs held in Geneva in July 1979 requested ^{1/} that the United Nations offer the NGOs the following: more relevant documentation for dissemination; publicity for NGO activities; ongoing exchange of

^{1/} Resolution on improving and strengthening NGO consultation with the United Nations system; Report of the fourteenth General Assembly Conference of NGOs in Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council, 2-5 July 1979.

Information; relevant material assistance; more active participation in the programmes and activities of United Nations agencies and organizations; joint projects; the facilitation of research work by NGOs and independent institutions; regular NGO input prior to major United Nations conferences in the field of development. The secretariat is trying to respond to these requests in its work with the NGOs, both at headquarters and through UNEP's Regional and Liaison Offices.

5. In carrying out work with NGOs UNEP emphasizes two-way communication, and the secretariat is fully in accord with the statement 2/ of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Committee to Review United Nations Public Information Policies and Activities, "The importance of non-governmental organizations in opinion-making, with their direct links with the publics of the world should be recognized, and their role in the public information work of the United Nations should be encouraged and emphasized...".

6. The following examples of UNEP's activities with NGOs demonstrate some of the ways in which UNEP attempts to improve and strengthen co-operation with NGOs.

WORLD CONSERVATION STRATEGY

7. UNEP participated in and provided financial support for the development and launching of the World Conservation Strategy, which was prepared by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) with the support of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). The Strategy grew out of a process which involved NGOs and Governments in more than 100 countries, and also benefited from the inputs of FAO and UNESCO; it is being published as a pack for decision-makers and as a commercially-published paperback, initially in English and French.

8. The Strategy deals with such issues as the growing transformation of productive land into desert, the quickening contraction of tropical forests, the collapse of fisheries and the loss of their support systems, the extinction of possibly thousands of species and varieties, and the impetus of population growth and rising resource consumption. It demonstrates that conservation is essential to development and that ecological considerations must be incorporated into the entire development process, and shows how this can be achieved.

2/ Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group to Review United Nations Public Information Policies and Activities (A/AC.198/L.8).

UNEP-SCOPE/ICSU STATEMENT ON GLOBAL LIFE SUPPORT SYSTEMS

9. Close working relationships have been developed with the Scientific Committee on the Problems of the Environment (SCOPE). UNEP staff members participated in the General Assembly of SCOPE, held in Stockholm in June 1979, and the President of SCOPE/ICSU and the UNEP Executive Director issued a joint statement ^{3/} on global life support systems, which statement called for increased co-operation by scientists in research which would lead to better understanding of the biogeochemical processes of the Earth's surface and the atmosphere. The statement also called upon Governments and intergovernmental agencies to co-operate in a collective endeavour which will provide, by 1992, a major advance in understanding of the complex interactions among these cycles.

INFOTERRA

10. NGOs have made up a significant part of the sources of information of INFOTERRA since its very inception. They continue to be helpful in facilitating the exchange of environmental information within and between nations. NGOs were active participants in the INFOTERRA network Management Meeting held in Moscow October 1979, and the NGO Environment Liaison Centre reported to the meeting on the relevant aspects of the NGO Environment Computer Profile Survey. The International Union of Associations assisted with the process of the meeting and made recommendations on ways of strengthening NGO participation in the network. Closer links between NGOs and the INFOTERRA national focal points are being developed as a result of this co-operation.

WORLD YOUTH CONGRESS ON FOOD AND DEVELOPMENT

11. UNEP was a major sponsor of the World Youth Congress on Food and Development held at Cairo in March 1979. Follow-up activities have also been assisted by UNEP, and materials have been sent to the youth representatives from 54 countries. ^{4/} Leaders of the Youth Congress have visited UNEP headquarters and have discussed the environmental aspects of food production. UNEP has been asked to assist in the preparations for the second congress, which is tentatively scheduled to be held in Indonesia in 1981.

ENERGY

12. NGOs have been involved in developing and disseminating UNEP's work on energy. Some of the NGOs which submitted recommendations on the environmental impacts of various energy processes are Friends of the Earth, the Environment Liaison Centre, the Tasmanian Environment Centre and the

^{3/} UNEP Information 47, 5 June 1979.

^{4/} "Proceedings of the World Youth Congress on Food and Development", Congress Secretariat, Cairo, June 1979.

Miljöförbundet, Sweden. These recommendations were taken into consideration in the development of the reports on fossil fuels and nuclear energy. The World Council of Churches was represented by an expert in the panel on nuclear energy. The Executive Director has invited NGOs to review these reports and to submit their evaluations and recommendations.

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT

13. UNEP actively supported the organizers of the NGO Forum of the United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development, and assisted with arrangements for the participation of an environmental NGO from a developing country. A UNEP paper 5/ was presented to the NGO Forum, and UNEP staff members participated in its meetings. The New York Liaison Office of UNEP has assisted the NGO follow-up committee on the Conference.

DISARMAMENT AND ENVIRONMENT

14. Some NGOs have expressed considerable interest in the environmental issues related to military activities and disarmament. One preparatory activity for the state of the environment topic for 1980, "Environmental effects of military activity", was UNEP's participation in an NGO meeting on peace, disarmament and the environment, organized by the World Peace Council and held in Moscow in October 1979.

15. The World Conference on Religion and Peace, held in Princeton, New Jersey in August 1979, also considered the environmental aspects of military activities. The final declaration of the Conference includes a section on environment and development issues as they relate to disarmament.

PACIFIC SCIENCE CONGRESS

16. UNEP provided financial support for and participated in the Pacific Science Congress, held at Khabarovsk, USSR, in August 1979. The 1,600 scientists from 46 countries who attended the Congress discussed new ways for the rational development of the Pacific's natural resources, increased co-operation to solve energy problems and joint activities to further monitor and protect the environment. UNEP funded the participation of 40 participants from less developed countries. A publication based on a selection of papers presented at the congress which deal with environmental issues will be brought out by UNEP in 1980.

5/ "Science, technology and environment": UNEP paper for the United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development, August 1979.

THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE CHILD

17. Information materials on the International Year of the Child, including the special issue of "Mazingira" on "The Child and the Environment" and the UNEP/UNICEF film "Remember Me", have been disseminated to NGOs. UNEP also sponsored and participated in the world-wide children's poster contest, and supported the publication by the NGO Environment Liaison Centre of a booklet of children's posters on the environment entitled "The Children's Message".

THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN

18. UNEP fosters women's awareness of environmental issues and co-operates with women's NGOs. UNEP played an active role in the programme of the International Council of Women (ICW) which was held in Nairobi in August 1979. The ICW Assembly viewed the UNEP/UNICEF film "Remember me", and members of the ICW Environment Committee also met with UNEP staff to discuss concrete ways of protecting children from environmental hazards. It was agreed to concentrate on protecting children from water-borne diseases.

NGO SEMINARS IN ASIA

19. UNEP sponsored and participated in NGO seminars held in Colombo (June 1979) and Tokyo (October 1979). Issues under consideration at the seminars were: (a) the present environmental situation in each country; (b) history of main environmental incidents in the countries; (c) the future role of NGOs in environmental work.

MARINE MAMMALS

20. Experts from IUCN and the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) contributed to the recommendations made at the UNEP-convened meeting on marine mammals (Nairobi, May 1979). Marine mammals were seen to be of great significance as indicator species for monitoring pollution of the oceans and the effectiveness of international conservation agreements. Numerous NGOs have presented materials to UNEP on endangered species of whales and have worked to influence the activities of the International Whaling Commission.

AFRICAN YOUTH LEADERS TRAINING COURSE IN ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION EDUCATION

21. The course, held in Nairobi in July 1979, and sponsored by UNEP, along with the Wildlife Clubs of Kenya, the World Wildlife Fund, the African Wildlife Leadership Foundation and the NGO Environment Liaison Centre, was attended by youth leaders from fifteen African countries. Its objectives were: (a) to help those responsible for local and national environmental conservation and education programmes for youth to acquire the skills and

knowledge to conduct effective and practical programmes; (b) to learn how conservation practices can help youth improve their environment and understand some of the choices they must make; (c) to help youth learn and understand the need to use ecological principles as guidelines for their actions.

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

22. The Nairobi-based Environment Liaison Centre (ELC), with UNEP financial support, helped co-ordinate the involvement of 4,000 NGOs in World Environment Day, 1979. It distributed a circular inviting them to participate, and an NGO Resource Pack, printed in newspaper format in French, English and Spanish, to 6,000 NGOs, 500 journalists, and 3,500 governmental and intergovernmental representatives.

23. The theme for World Environment Day 1979 was "Only One Future For Our Children: Development Without Destruction". It coincided with the International Year of the Child, and resulted in UNEP and ELC playing a major role in United Nations and international NGO activities related to the Year of the Child. The project was co-ordinated closely with IYC National Commissions and the IYC Secretariat, and through them reached an entirely new audience with its information materials.

24. Among the activities carried out by NGOs as a result of this project were: a seminar on forest resources conducted by the Forestry Association of Nigeria, an exhibition on the environmental needs of Children organized by the Chamber of Architects of Turkey, an Environment Day essay competition sponsored by the Institution of Environmental Sciences of the United Kingdom, radio programmes on conservation of forests and pollution produced by the Sudan Environment Conservation Society, an environment festival held by the United Nations Association of Australia, a display of cinema slides given in 12 cinema theatres by the Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group of India, a national seminar on "Development without Destruction" conducted by the Ghana Young Farmers Club and films and exhibitions presented by the Union Mondiale des Pionniers de Stockholm of France.

INFORMATION

25. Many NGOs support UNEP's information efforts through their own information networks and through their contacts with the mass media. One of the NGOs which is most effective in intensifying awareness of environmental issues by stimulating the flow of relevant information through mass communication media is the International Institute for Environment and Development, through its Earthscan Programme. This programme, which is given financial support by UNEP, complements the other information activities of the UNEP Division of Information by concentrating on activities not already appropriately covered by other UNEP-funded information projects, or by other information programmes within or outside the United Nations system. Earthscan activities include the organization of meetings, seminars, field trips, workshops and other media consultations and training activities, press briefing seminars, and the preparation, production, publication and distribution of information materials.

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH FEDERATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL
STUDIES AND CONSERVATION

26. UNEP provided financial assistance for participants in the General Assembly of the International Youth Federation for Environmental Studies and Conservation (Luxembourg, August 1979). UNEP's information materials were also made available to the participants. The Assembly considered and gave strong support to the World Conservation Strategy.

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON INDUSTRY AND
ENVIRONMENT

27. UNEP participated in the sixth session of the General Assembly of the International Council on Industry and Environment which was held in Geneva, September 1979. The Directors of UNEP's Industry and Environment, International Register of Potentially Toxic Chemicals, and Geneva Liaison Offices addressed the Assembly.

Suggested action by the Governing Council

28. The Governing Council may wish to:

(a) Express appreciation to all non-governmental organizations which have taken part in environmental activities and have contributed to the programme activities of the United Nations Environment Programme, and invite such organizations to continue to maintain close co-operation with the Programme;

(b) Call on the Executive Director and member States further to encourage the creation and growth of non-governmental organizations and their activities in the field of the environment.
