



**Governing Council  
of the United Nations  
Environment Programme**



Distr.  
GENERAL

UNEP/GC.18/34/Add.1  
15 May 1995

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Eighteenth session  
Nairobi, 15-26 May 1995  
Agenda item 4

POLICY ISSUES

Policy statement by the Executive Director

Addendum

STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AT THE OPENING MEETING OF THE  
EIGHTEENTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL, 15 MAY 1995

1. Mr. President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates and colleagues. Good morning! We in the Secretariat welcome you to Gigiri with pride and with a sense of anticipation. We are encouraged by the strong statements of support from all corners of the world and by the projected unprecedented attendance here of Ministers of Environment. The need for a forum in which emerging environmental issues can be discussed, where Ministers with like concerns can support each other and where global solutions can be designed has never been greater.
2. In this fiftieth anniversary year of the United Nations we pause to reflect on our collective agendas for peace, development and alleviation of poverty. To each a healthy environment is central. It is most appropriate then that this Governing Council measure UNEP's performance against its contribution to a safe and secure world and chart a course that will maximize its potential as the environmental conscience of the United Nations system.
3. With this Governing Council we move beyond our period of introspection and transition that followed UNCED. We do so with confidence and enthusiasm to act on our vision - to meet our commitment to governments and their citizens that we can help them in their efforts to improve the human environment. This significant Governing Council is called upon to take the decisions necessary to effect this change. It is the weight of your political decisions that will ensure the credibility of this organization as an authoritative voice for the environment.

4. We do not bear this burden alone. UNEP has contributed significantly to the promotion of environmental awareness in the international community. Today, 23 years after Stockholm we have an environmental agenda that is integrated conceptually with the goals of economic development and social well-being, an agenda for sustainable development. The Commission on Sustainable Development provides the forum to address the integrated issues of development, environment and social equity. In the Commission, UNEP has a most valuable ally.

5. At its seventeenth session, Governing Council recognized that in order to contribute fully and effectively to this new agenda, UNEP would have to rethink its focus and priorities and substantially change the nature of its programme, its method of delivery and its relationship with other collaborators. New realities require new responses. In response, the secretariat has engaged in a broad consultative process about UNEP's future. To those who helped us reach this milestone, our thanks. Your thoughtful and constructive criticism and your determined and forcefully articulated vision have borne fruit - a focused, issue-oriented and integrated work programme and a set of policy proposals for strengthening the organization.

6. UNEP's uniqueness lies in its advocacy for environmental concerns within the international system. We should be the pre-eminent instrument of the world community to oversee, in an uncompromising fashion, the overall implementation of an international environmental programme. We must clearly and unambiguously provide principal environmental inputs into the sustainable development agenda and play a key function in shaping a global environmental consensus.

7. In providing the environmental policy leadership within the multilateral community, and in particular the United Nations system, we will focus on: first, the assessment of environmental change, its relationship with socio-economic driving forces and its impact on human well-being and the integrity of natural systems; secondly, the facilitation of consensus-building and the development of policy options to support strategic decision-making; and thirdly, the catalysis of responsible action by Governments and civil society at large. To that end, we will use our convening power to marshal the intellectual and scientific capacity of international, regional and national institutions to assist.

8. Currently we function within a system which is far from coherent. To redress this situation and to respond to the mandates of UNCED and our last Governing Council we are presenting to you a policy and programme framework that addresses the requirements for organizational effectiveness: a firm institutional setting, a sound scientific base, a broader constituency, a capacity to catalyse action, a sound financial footing, a role in conflict prevention and resolution, and a fully integrated approach.

9. Sustainable development is a whole greater than the sum of its many parts. The task of coordinating the inputs to ensure a successful outcome is enormous. That is clearly the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). The role for UNEP is to bring the environmental perspective to that discussion - a complement to the work of CSD. CSD's work will be strengthened by the quality of the inputs it receives from UNEP and others. Our philosophical analysis and our proposed work programme are fully consistent with and provide the right focus and framework for an integrated response to the concerns of the CSD.

10. As we have examined our strengths and weaknesses as an institution within the context of post-UNCED arrangements, we have, in consultation with the other agencies and organizations of the United Nations system, explored the need for (re)establishment of an inter-agency body on environment and for the development of a longer-term system-wide strategy. The documents presented to this Governing Council propose to proceed in a flexible and pragmatic manner focussing on the priority issues in UNEP's work programme 1996-1997.

11. Science, which incorporates the state of the physical environment, as well as the social, economic and cultural driving forces of change, is an essential foundation for both policy and action. There are continuous efforts under way and proposals to ensure and expand the scientific basis of UNEP's work, including enlisting ad hoc groups of experts, forging alliances with international science bodies and engaging national and regional centres of specialized expertise.

12. As an intergovernmental organization, UNEP's formal constituency is Governments. Nevertheless, in order to effectively fulfill its mission, UNEP must actively involve other sectors of society. It is significant that we have engaged the interest and involvement of the financial-services sector, namely commercial banks and insurance companies, in environmental matters. Through the Committee of International Development Institutions on the Environment (CIDIE), which will be converted into a flexible networking organization, collaboration with the multilateral development financing institutions will be strengthened. More systematic and predictable cooperation with major groups is being realized, with a particular emphasis on women.

13. Our capacity to catalyse action will be greatly enhanced by close collaboration with our sister agency, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Concrete actions have already been taken to ensure that the programmes, expertise and resources of each organization are deployed in the most complementary and strategic of ways. Our partnership agreements encourage a full utilization of and reliance on UNDP's country presence and practical experiences and UNEP's regional office coordination and headquarters' scientific and technical expertise.

14. Central to UNEP's future effectiveness is the strategy to strengthen its regional offices, ensuring that appropriate expertise is readily available to the Governments and people the offices serve. And that strategy is already reaping benefits in generating creative solutions and responsive service.

15. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is yet another key to the catalysing of environmental action. UNEP has become a strong and visible partner in the Facility. Our "strategy and programme focus" sets a clear direction for UNEP's contribution to the GEF by providing scientific and technical expertise, contributing to operations policy strategies and guidance, and undertaking specific types of catalytic project-related activities which build on UNEP's existing programme to capture additional global environmental benefits.

16. We are aware of the undercurrents hinting at lower levels of financing for international institutions. Unfortunately, this does not correspond to growing international concerns. We are already and have always been an organization living on the financial edge. We have seen a reduction in the general, voluntary contributions to the Environment Fund coinciding in part with the general trend in ODA reduction by the donor community. This has been accompanied by the unpredictability of contributions and actual payments, which hampers the effective implementation of UNEP's programme of work. Commitments and payments made late in the year cannot be spent in that year. As a consequence the full programme for the year cannot be implemented. It also creates cash carry-overs, leaving the impression that UNEP has an excess of financial resources.

17. Furthermore, contributions targeted for specific purposes have been increasing. Although this is manageable administratively, care needs to be exercised to ensure that the priorities of Governing Council are not displaced. A predictable source of funding, which matches the scope of its mandate, is essential in underwriting UNEP's professional excellence and vitality. New funding sources must be explored as a means of securing a sufficient and stable resource base.

18. In one of its earlier sessions, the Governing Council requested UNEP to assist in preventing and solving potential environmental conflicts. UNEP's present efforts and work with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and with UNCHS (Habitat) in the continuum working group are aimed at linking a well developed and operational environmental assessment programme to a rapid delivery capacity and advisory services designed to prevent and mitigate adverse effects of natural and man-made disasters.

19. A recurring theme since UNCED has been our interdependence as peoples and the inevitable linkages among the entire range of environmental and economic sectors of our lives. Success in realizing sustainable development and in incorporating fully the environmental dimension can only be brought about with an integrated approach. Piecemeal approaches will no longer work. Furthermore, citizens are becoming impatient with the wasteful way in which their treasuries are spending their resources. Duplication of efforts will no longer be economically possible. We know that the deep institutional crises faced by many Governments must reverberate in the fabric of our international institutional system. We have to become more efficient in discharging our growing international responsibilities for isolationism is not a valid response. The world is too interconnected. The fate of a distant community is increasingly becoming our fate.

20. This theme of integration has been a guiding principle in the preparation of the proposed programme of work for 1996-1997. The programme responds to principal environmental challenges by focussing not on sectoral concerns but at the interface between those concerns. As well it provides a framework for integrating and addressing the results and recommendations of major United Nations Conferences and events in the social and economic fields, such as the Population Conference, the Social Summit, the Beijing Women's Conference and Habitat II.

21. We know we cannot do everything. UNEP must consolidate and rationalize its broad range of programme activities without narrowing the scope of its environmental agenda. Four environmental challenges have been chosen: sustainable management and use of natural resources, sustainable production and consumption, a better environment for human health and well-being, and globalization trends and the environment. In any biennium one must set priorities and achievable targets. This programme has a sharper focus where we believe we can provide added value.

22. But how does one implement a fully integrated programme? In accordance with the outcome of the consultations with Governments, UNEP's proposed programme of work is of the same level of detail as presented in the past. However this is a different programme. You will find it difficult to compare this framework with earlier sectorially defined programmes. This is an integrated response to the concerns of the international community. Sectors that have been of particular interest to you no longer stand alone. This does not represent the work plans of individual organizational units. It is self-evident that a response to the protection of coral reefs for example, can only be holistic when the expertise from international law, oceanographers, climate change scientists, biodiversity experts, economists and educators are harnessed. The degradation of the marine environment is as much about urbanization and agricultural practices as it is about the ocean.

23. For each environmental challenge, the life cycle of the issue will determine whether in 1996-1997 the primary focus rests with assessment, or with policy development or with mobilizing action. We are not just paying lip-service to this overused word - integration - but rather are making a real attempt to direct our resources to the right functional phase of the policy cycle.

24. Similarly we must not artificially divide headquarters and regions. A flexible decentralized structure which allows UNEP to respond quickly to a wide variety of unanticipated needs must be developed. Strategic thinking, the entrepreneurial ability to explore new options, exploit diverse

/...

possibilities and effectively mobilize others are crucial elements. The professional quality of our staff must also be enhanced to achieve the credibility necessary to exercise a leadership role. To secure our future as an organization, professionalism rather than politicization must predominate.

25. Once this proposed framework is endorsed by you, detailed workplans will be developed before the end of the year for each subprogramme element. The 1996-1997 programme of work will be ready to be implemented on 1 January 1996. UNEP's organizational structure will be realigned to accommodate a cost-effective implementation of these workplans. A guiding principle will be to make the best use of the human resources required through multidisciplinary teams.

26. In further development and implementation of the workplans, UNEP will actively seek and ensure close collaboration with agencies and organizations within and outside the United Nations system. In reality, our ability to implement the programme and to attract and maximize the necessary scarce resources requires collaboration and avoidance of duplication. In addition to those relationships previously mentioned with CSD, UNDP and GEF, specific documentation is tabled concerning UNEP's special collaboration with UNCHS (Habitat) while reference to other most important partners infuses most documents. There is little that UNEP can do successfully alone.

27. UNEP has been asked in Agenda 21 to coordinate the functions of the convention secretariats, taking into account the need for the most efficient use of resources. An analysis has been made of the relationships between UNEP and a number of major global and regional environmental conventions and their secretariats. This is the subject of discussions at the second meeting on coordination of secretariats of environmental conventions. We anticipate that a report of this meeting will be made available as a background document to the Governing Council.

28. Finally, a programme can only flourish if it has an enabling environment. At a time when the world at large is reflecting on how to reengineer its institutional systems, management reforms at UNEP must continue. The development of a management culture that empowers but demands accountability for the achievement of results is essential.

29. The secretariat of UNEP was established by Governments to assist them in their deliberations and follow-up on their collective decisions. Its executive management is freely and by consensus chosen by Governments, who also establish the rules and procedures for financial and programmatic accountability. Reporting on the cost-effectiveness of the results obtained is a reasonable and desirable request. However it would be counter-productive if the monitoring interventions constrained the Secretariat's implementing options and decision-making.

30. UNEP is one member of a family. In 1994, the Secretary-General advised the General Assembly that he was taking a number of measures to strengthen the United Nations presence in Nairobi. The establishment of a common administrative centre for the United Nations is an opportunity for UNEP to reduce administrative costs and reallocate savings to much needed improvements in basic infrastructure such as electronic systems for internal and external communications. But more importantly, this headquarters in the developing world is being given the recognition it deserves.

31. UNEP must work within the context of the United Nations system positioning itself to contribute effectively to the overall integration undertaken by CSD, to develop its programmes in full coordination with UNDP and the specialized agencies of the United Nations. Our planning, administrative and policy setting cycles must be in tune with those of the System as a whole. That is why the issue of periodicity and duration of Governing Council is before you. At the moment for example, CSD, CPC and ACABQ take decisions related to UNEP's policy and operational functions prior to the decisions of its Governing Council. Even as we speak we are providing

/...

additional information to ACABQ on the same budgetary matters you are considering and the Committee for Programme and Coordination is currently reviewing an in-depth evaluation of UNEP. Both the final report of the CPC and the budget revision by ACABQ will be made available to you in the course of your deliberations.

32. I have spoken of change. That change is under way. But lest you think we have only been reflecting let me assure you that in 1994-1995 we have not been idle. We have achieved results of which we are very proud. From trade to biodiversity, chemical safety to desertification, wildlife protection to assessment we are making a difference.

33. What better time than on the eve of the millennium, for UNEP, an organization born out of a global consciousness, that not only sought peace amongst ourselves, but also with nature, to once again face the challenge of leading the international system to the adoption of integrated responses to its challenges.

34. We are a small organization based in the developing world, with scarce financial resources. A marginal forum in the eyes of those who view world power solely in terms of economic gains. Yet one which has led the world in mobilizing effective measures to protect its children and its children's children from the side-effects of our thoughtless actions. An unprecedented achievement in human legislation.

35. A brief glance at the environmental challenges facing the world leaves absolutely no doubt that the world needs a custodian of the environment, an advocate for the environment, an organization with the power and the credibility to assert the needs of the environment whenever it is threatened. UNEP is that organization. Taken together, the policy and programme proposals in the set of documents before this Governing Council set UNEP's environmental priorities for the next biennium and chart the policy direction for the organization's future.

-----