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**GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM**

**STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT**

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE PROTECTION  
OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT FROM LAND-BASED ACTIVITIES**

Note by the Executive Director

This information note is submitted in response to decisions 20/19 A and 20/19 B of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). It provides a summary of the major activities implemented by UNEP, as secretariat of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities to promote and facilitate implementation of the Programme of Action at the national, regional and global levels.

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This document was submitted late to Conference Service due to the need to include all activities undertaken in 2000.

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I. Action taken by UNEP to implement relevant Governing Council decisions

A. GC 20/19 B 1

1. Governing Council decision 20/19.B, inter alia: (a) Urged the Executive Director to complete the establishment of the Coordination Office of the Global Programme of Action (the GPA Coordination Office), in The Hague, the Netherlands; (b) requested the Executive Director, in cooperation with Governments, United Nations bodies and agencies and other relevant organizations, to explore whether UNEP could feasibly convene, by the year 2000, a global conference to address sewage as a major land-based source of pollution affecting human and ecosystem health; (c) decided to undertake the first intergovernmental review of the status of implementation of the Global Programme of Action in the year 2001; (d) invited the Executive Director to organize an expert group meeting for Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations, in order to facilitate the preparations for such a review; (e) called on the Executive Director to improve the effective functioning of the steering committee of the Global Programme of Action; and (f) recommended national and regional partnership meetings.
2. With the appointment of the Deputy Coordinator (January 1999), two Programme Officers (March-April 1999) and the Coordinator (August 1999), the establishment of the Coordination Office in The Hague, the Netherlands, has been completed and the office is fully staffed (a total of six professional officers) and operational. UNEP acknowledges with thanks the continued support provided by the Government of the Netherlands to the operation of the Coordination Office in The Hague.
3. In response to the above-mentioned Governing Council decision, the Global Programme of Action, and calls from various regional meetings, sewage is addressed as a priority. UNEP, in close partnership with the World Health Organization, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) and the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council, developed a strategic action plan on municipal wastewater. The plan builds upon and further develops the relevant sections on sewage in the Global Programme of Action. The plan consists of three components: (a) Assessment; (b) management; and (c) coordination. A key product is a set of recommendations for decision-making on municipal wastewater, which constitute practical guidelines for municipal wastewater authorities containing key principles and recommended practices and procedures. Other products include a global review of the state of affairs; local and regional case studies, identifying challenges, opportunities and the benefits of action; and demonstration projects illustrating effective partnerships and sustainable financial mechanisms. To ensure that the recommended practices and procedures address the realities of different regions, meetings with a wide group of stakeholders have been conducted in four regions.
4. With regard to the feasibility of convening a global conference on sewage, after consultations with partners it was considered more appropriate to have a global consultative process consisting of three parts: (a) A high level segment, seeking the endorsement of the recommended practices and procedures, to be associated with the first intergovernmental review meeting on implementation of the Global Programme of Action (planned for November 2001 in Canada); (b) various sessions for professionals through participation in relevant global and regional professional conferences; and (c) a set of regional meetings involving a wide range of stakeholders as mentioned in paragraph 3 above. Four of these meetings are being organized in the framework of the Regional Seas Programme and will bring together representatives of Governments, local authorities, the private sector, international financing institutions, potential donors and other major groups. This approach was endorsed by the Expert Group Meeting to Prepare the First Intergovernmental Review on Implementation of the Global Programme of Action (The Hague, 26-28 April 2000) (see below), which also expressed general support for the approach contained in the strategic action plan on municipal wastewater. The experts concluded that there was no need for a global conference on sewage, but rather recommended that sewage, as one of the most important components of the Global Programme of Action, should be assigned a prominent place at the intergovernmental review meeting. The financial support of the Governments of Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway and the United States of America for these meetings is gratefully acknowledged.
5. With regard to the preparations for the first intergovernmental review on implementation of the Global Programme of Action, UNEP convened the expert group meeting mentioned in paragraph four above. The experts discussed the scope, expected outputs and preparatory process leading to the intergovernmental review

meeting in 2001, as well as the reporting procedures and organizational matters related to the meeting itself. The experts recommended that, bearing in mind the important implications of the Global Programme of Action with respect to issues such as human health, poverty alleviation and food security, the overriding objectives of the intergovernmental review be to mainstream the Programme of Action and forward its implementation.

6. The experts agreed to focus the intergovernmental review process and meeting on the following five thematic areas: (a) National and regional programmes of action, involving governments and regional organizations; (b) voluntary agreements involving the private and public sectors; (c) capacity-building; (d) financing; and (e) monitoring progress and sharing experiences.

7. With respect to the preparatory process for the intergovernmental review meeting, the experts agreed that it should be based on, and aimed at, the active involvement of Governments, regional organizations, international organizations, the private sector, international financial institutions, non-governmental organizations, local communities and other major groups. The regional seas and other regional mechanisms were invited to play a major role and UNEP, as secretariat of the Global Programme of Action, was called upon to facilitate the process. Where regional seas programmes do not exist or do not function adequately, the experts called upon the Executive Director to assist governments in those regions to participate in the preparatory process for the intergovernmental review meeting.

8. In accordance with paragraph 77 of the Global Programme of Action, the intergovernmental review will:

- (a) Review progress on implementation of the Programme of Action at the national, regional and global levels;
- (b) Review the results of scientific assessments regarding land-based impacts upon the marine environment provided by relevant scientific organizations and institutions, including the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection;
- (c) Consider reports provided on national plans to implement the Programme of Action;
- (d) Review coordination and collaboration among regional and global organizations and institutions with relevant responsibilities and experience;
- (e) Promote exchange of experience between regions;
- (f) Review progress in capacity-building and on mobilization of resources to support the implementation of the Programme of Action, in particular in countries in need of assistance, and, where appropriate, provide guidance; and
- (g) Consider the need for international rules, recommended practices and procedures to further the objectives of the Programme of Action.

9. Specific products of the intergovernmental review meeting could include:

- (a) A ministerial/high level declaration adopted by Governments and other major stakeholders and groups (e.g., private sector, non-governmental organizations, international financial institutions) addressing, among other things, concrete action to further the implementation of the Global Programme of Action;
- (b) Endorsement of the recommendations for decision-making on municipal wastewater and agreement that the approach taken in preparing the strategic action plan on municipal wastewater be used to address other pollutant source categories;
- (c) Sharing of experience and expertise among Governments and a wider range of stakeholders in support of implementation of the Global Programme of Action;

(d) A work programme for 2002-2006 to further implementation of the Global Programme of Action, with identification of specific activities, targets and financial implications, to be undertaken by Governments, international and regional governmental and non-governmental organizations, the private sector, other major groups and the GPA Coordination Office.

10. With regard to the request to improve the functioning of the steering committee of the Global Programme of Action, the role and responsibilities of the Administrative Committee on Coordination Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas and the Administrative Committee on Coordination Subcommittee on Water Resources in facilitating inter-agency cooperation on implementation of the Programme of Action has been agreed upon by the two subcommittees. The subcommittees will provide a platform for enhanced inter-agency coordination and cooperation in matters related to implementation of the Programme of Action, by:

(a) Facilitating input of the individual partner agencies in implementation of the Global Programme of Action;

(b) Commenting and providing advice on the status of implementation of the Programme of Action and on its future development plans;

(c) Reviewing, as appropriate, the roles and responsibilities of individual agencies in implementation of the Programme of Action; and

(d) Providing a forum for outreach on the Programme of Action.

11. Given the nature of the Administrative Committee on Coordination sub-committees, they will not function as a steering committee for the Global Programme of Action in the traditional sense of the word. Rather, they will provide a mechanism to facilitate and promote contributions by agencies to the implementation of the Programme of Action.

#### B. GC 20/19 A and GC 20/19 B 2

12. In decision 20/19 A, the Governing Council stressed the need for UNEP to strengthen the Regional Seas Programme as its central mechanism for implementation of its activities relevant to chapter 17 of Agenda 21, and invited the Executive Director to identify specific activities for the work of UNEP in the following areas, among others: (a) Promoting the formulation, adoption and implementation of appropriate technical, institutional, administrative and legal measures for the protection of the marine and coastal environment, including the application of the guidelines set forth in the Global Programme of Action; (b) facilitating the assessment of the state of the marine environment, including the trends of changes in it and identification of important emerging issues (there is also specific mention in the Global Programme of Action of the need to review the results of scientific assessments on the impact of land-based activities, i.e., objective "b" of the intergovernmental review meeting, see paragraph 8 above); and (c) exploring the need for an expansion of the Regional Seas Programme to geographical areas not currently covered.

13. In decision 20/19 B 2, the Governing Council further endorsed decision 19/14 A calling for revitalization the Global Programme of Action and the strengthening of the regional seas programme and the coastal-zone-management approach, as called for in the Global Programme of Action.

#### II. Actions taken by UNEP since the twentieth session of the Governing Council in response to decisions 20/19 A and 20/19 B

14. After establishment of the Coordination Office in The Hague in August 1999, efforts were directed towards developing a focused programme of work culminating in the intergovernmental review meeting in November 2001. Consistent with the approach outlined by UNEP's Water Strategy and Policy, the three main areas of activities of the Coordination Office are: (i) Assessment/analysis for action; (ii) mobilizing action at the national, regional and global levels; and (iii) evaluating progress and further development of the Global Programme of Action. Major action and results are discussed below, as are the five thematic areas that will

constitute the focus of the intergovernmental review process and meeting as agreed by the expert group meeting mentioned above.

#### A. Assessment/analysis for action

15. Under the leadership of UNEP, the United Nations-sponsored Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection finalized two global assessment reports. The two global reports will be published in early 2001. One report summarizes the major issues pertaining to oceans. The other report, which focuses on land-based sources and activities affecting the quality and uses of the marine, coastal and associated freshwater environments concludes that at the global level the most serious problems associated with land-based activities are sewage, physical alteration and destruction of habitats, nutrients and sediment mobilization, a finding also confirmed by nine regional workshops on land-based activities attended by Government-designated experts organized by UNEP from 1996–1999 within the framework of the Regional Seas Programme.

16. Ten assessments on land-based activities, emanating from the above-mentioned regional workshops, have been published.

17. A set of analytical documents prepared in consultation with the private sector were finalized as an input to the intergovernmental review meeting on the Global Programme of Action.

#### B. Mobilizing action at the national, regional and global levels

##### 1. Advancing binding and non-binding policy and programme agreements

18. In the context of the regional workshops referred to in paragraph 15 above, UNEP will support seven developing countries in preparing national programmes of action.

19. UNEP, in cooperation with regional organizations, has also supported preparation of regional programmes of action on land-based activities in four areas: The Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, South Asia, the South Pacific and East Asia. These programmes of action have been endorsed by Government-designated experts.

20. Support was also provided to: (a) The Caribbean Environment Programme, as secretariat of the Cartagena Convention, leading to the adoption (in October 1999) of a protocol on land-based sources of pollution for the wider Caribbean region; (b) the UNEP Division of Environmental Conventions on the negotiation of a draft convention and plan of action for the sustainable development of the marine and coastal environment of the Northeast Pacific; and (c) The Division of Environmental Conventions in helping the Northwest Pacific action plan to address land-based activities.

21. Close collaboration has been established with UNEP and non-UNEP regional seas programmes (e.g., the Helsinki Commission, the OSPAR Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic and the Arctic Council – Protection of the Arctic Environment) concerning exchange of information and experiences, contributions to the intergovernmental review in 2001, linking of respective Web-sites and twinning.

##### 2. Voluntary agreements

22. Close partnerships have been developed with the tourism sector through cooperation with the UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics. A feasibility phase for replication of the Blue Flag Campaign on beach management in the Caribbean and Asia Pacific regions has been completed jointly with the division, with the production of country feasibility reports for seven participating countries in the Caribbean and three in Asia. Draft regional criteria for the implementation of the campaign in both regions have been prepared and are the subject of consultation. Commitments have been secured in several Caribbean countries to establish national coordinating mechanisms.

23. In the framework of preparations for the intergovernmental review meeting, several sectors (tourism, insurance, ports and harbours, and the water industry) have been requested to submit reports about their possible involvement in the implementation of the Global Programme of Action and the need to develop codes of conduct or other forms of voluntary action.

24. The above initiatives are steps towards developing guidance for stakeholders' involvement in the implementation of the Global Programme of Action, for the development of voluntary action and other forms of partnerships between the public and the private sector, and input to the intergovernmental review meeting.

### 3. Capacity building

25. Besides those activities related to sewage and the development of the clearing-house mechanism, the following activities have been undertaken by UNEP: (a) A twinning agreement between the Helsinki Commission and UNEP's regional seas programme for the Eastern African region (May 2000); and (b) development of the Train-Sea-Coast programme module on the Global Programme of Action in cooperation with the United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, focusing on sewage management. The Train-Sea-Coast programme is a training network on oceans and coastal issues. Other twinning arrangements are under discussion.

26. Progress has been achieved in the development and operation of the Clearing-House Mechanism of the Global Programme of Action, including: (a) The launching of its central node in September 1999; (b) the development of pollutant source category nodes by the relevant United Nations agencies; (c) development of pilot projects for two regional nodes (wider Caribbean and South Pacific); and (d) the establishment of links with the clearing-house of the Convention on Biological Diversity. There are also a number of related activities initiated with relevant UNEP divisions and offices, including the Division of Early Warning and Assessment (formerly the Division of Environmental Information Assessment and Early Warning), the Division of Environmental Conventions (and the Regional Seas Programme) and GRID centres.

### 4. Making connections with the policy frameworks of conventions and international programmes

27. In addition to the links related to the Clearing-House and sewage, connections on areas of mutual interest with the following have been established: (a) The Barbados Programme of Action on Small Islands Developing States (the UNEP SIDS focal point is located in the Coordination Office of the Global Programme of Action); (b) global and regional conventions (through UNEP's Division of Environmental Conventions); (c) the Convention on Biological Diversity (the Coordination Office of the Global Programme of Action and the secretariat for the Convention on Biological Diversity have agreed to enter into a memorandum of understanding as a means of developing joint programming opportunities on the clearing-house, physical alterations and habitat destruction and impacts of land-based activities on marine biodiversity); (d) the Second World Water Forum and Ministerial Conference (The Hague, March 2000); and (e) the First Informal Consultative Process on Oceans (UNICPO) (New York, May-June 2000).

### C. Evaluating progress and further development of the Global Programme of Action

28. Progress in organizing the first intergovernmental review on implementing the Global Programme of Action has already been addressed in this document.

29. In line with the Malmö Ministerial Declaration and the strategic direction of the Division of Environmental Policy Implementation as detailed in its 2002-2003 work programme, the Coordination Office of the Global Programme of Action will further focus its activities on: (a) enhancement of the capacities of Governments to implement the Global Programme of Action and engage in its implementation major stakeholders and groups, including the private sector; (b) the endorsement of practical management tools and guidelines, including those pertaining to the financial sector; (c) ensuring effective sharing of information and expertise and capacity-building through the Clearing-house Mechanism; and (d) keeping under review the implementation of the Global Programme of Action.

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