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THE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME
(LEVELS ONE, TWO AND THREE)

DEVELOPMENTS DURING FEBRUARY - APRIL 1977

This document reports on important developments
in the environment programme in the three levels
since 31 January 1977, the cut-off date for
document UNEP/GC/90.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The programme document for the fifth session of the Governing Council - UNEP/GC/90 - described developments in the programme up to 31 January 1977; this report brings the text up to date by describing important events in the following three months, i.e. from 1 February to 30 April 1977.
2. The criteria for inclusion of material in this report are:
 - (a) That the development occurred during those three months;
 - (b) That the matters involved are sufficiently important, for example in terms of policy development, to require up-dating or correcting the basic text; in other words, if they had occurred before 31 January, they would have been referred to in document UNEP/GC/90.
3. The text has been arranged according to the sequence used in document UNEP/GC/90, with appropriate chapter, section and sub-section headings and with a reference to the corresponding paragraph(s) in the programme document. The omission of a particular chapter, section or sub-section does not, of course, mean that there has been no progress in the area concerned, but that the text in UNEP/GC/90 is in no need of correction.
4. It has not been possible to discuss the draft of this report with members of the United Nations system and other organizations; the information may not, therefore, be complete in every respect.

Chapter II

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

A. EARTHWATCH

2. The components of the assessment process
 - (b) Research (paragraph 59) and (d) Evaluation/Review (paragraph 102)
5. The first meeting of the sub-group on research and evaluation of the Environment Co-ordination Board's Earthwatch working group will take place during the fifth session of the Governing Council.
- (c) Information exchange (paragraphs 73-86)
6. Since 1 February 1977, the following developments have taken place:
 - (a) The number of focal points submitting sources has risen from 17 to 28, and the number of sources received from 1,100 to 3,300. In addition, data are available on some 900 non-governmental organization sources, which can be included in the IRS directory upon the agreement of their respective Governments;

(b) The printed IRS International Directory is now available in English, French and Spanish. It is published in three volumes with a cumulative index and contains more than 3,000 sources. With its publication, IRS queries are now being handled by individual national focal points, which are also being provided with source data magnetic tape for computer processing and the necessary computer software;

(c) A fully operational communication link has been established between the IRS programme activity centre in Nairobi and the International Computing Centre in Geneva. This will enable IRS to respond within 48 hours to referral requests received in Nairobi.

7. An expert group meeting was held in Geneva (13-16 April 1977), to assist in the design of a review and evaluation of IRS. It emphasized the desirability of including all aspects of the system in the review, not just the technical ones. The group proposed a strategy for the conduct of the review, which is to be implemented in phases during 1977 and 1978.

3. Assessment of basic human needs (paragraphs 114-115)

8. The expert meeting to review the findings of the study on the assessment of basic human needs and resources required for their satisfaction took place in Barbados (1-5 April 1977). The group made appreciable progress in evolving a methodology for assessing the extent to which human needs are not satisfied. The meeting's recommendations and observations are now being used in deciding on appropriate follow-up action.

9. UNEP participated in two meetings of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) which discussed the general development objectives set by intergovernmental bodies and the means at the disposal of United Nations organizations to contribute to their attainment, particularly in the context of eradicating poverty and satisfying basic human needs. UNEP will participate in the task force to be set up by ACC to propose long-term development targets and programmes for achieving them; this task force and other forums will be used to encourage the international community to make the satisfaction of basic human needs on a sustainable basis a key objective of future international development strategies.

4. Assessment of outer limits:
risks to the ozone layer
(paragraph 140)

10. Experts from 32 countries, and from United Nations bodies, specialized agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations met in Washington, D.C. from 1 to 9 March to consider all aspects of the ozone layer. The meeting made recommendations on a "World Plan of Action on the Ozone Layer". This plan, the complete text of which will be available to the Governing Council along with a report on the meeting, 1/ recommended action and identified the agency to take the lead role in the following areas:

1/ Document UNEP/W G. 7/25/Rev.1.

(a) The natural ozone layer and its modification by man's activities: Encouragement and support for the co-ordinated research and monitoring programme already initiated by WMO so as to clarify various physical aspects of the ozone layer and evaluate the impact of man's activities on the ozone balance;

(b) The impact of changes in the ozone layer: Encouragement, support and co-ordination of numerous investigations into the impact of ozone layer modification and increased ultraviolet radiation (UV-B) on man, the biosphere and climate;

(c) Socio-economic aspects: National and International support for studies of the socio-economic results of ozone layer depletion and of alternative courses of action to limit or control emissions which threaten ozone.

11. The report of the meeting has since been sent to all Governments and agencies, with a request that they inform UNEP how they can help implement the plan. For its part, UNEP intends to assume responsibility for ensuring that the plan is implemented, and will exercise a co-ordinating and catalytic function by arranging for the dissemination of information about research activities, reviewing and presenting the results of research, identifying further research needs and encouraging such research. Steps have also been taken to set up the co-ordinating committee envisaged in the action plan, and it is hoped that it will meet for the first time in the latter half of 1977. Progress in implementing the plan will be reported to Governments and the Governing Council.

Chapter III

PRIORITY SUBJECT AREAS

A. HUMAN SETTLEMENTS AND HUMAN HEALTH

1. Human settlements and habitat (paragraphs 177 and 189)

12. In response to General Assembly resolution 31/116, the United Nations regional commissions have held intergovernmental meetings to discuss the Habitat Conference recommendations and their relevance to the future work of the commissions. These meetings endorsed the Habitat recommendations to establish intergovernmental committees on human settlements within the commissions where these did not already exist, and to strengthen the administrative capacities of the secretariats to deal with an expanded programme of human settlements.

2. Health of people and of the environment
(paragraph 211)

13. The second FAO/UNEP Intersecretariat meeting on environmental criteria for the assessment of the effects of pollution on agriculture, forestry and fisheries was held in Rome (17-18 February 1977) and formulated proposals for action to be taken by FAO, UNESCO and other United Nations bodies, covering the period up to 1979, to develop dose/effect relationships of certain pollutants in a limited number of ecosystems.

B. TERRESTRIAL ECOSYSTEMS

6. Water (paragraph 342)

14. The United Nations Water Conference took place in March 1977. Representatives of 116 States took part, including 85 developing countries, a number of whom had been assisted by UNEP in meeting the costs of attendance.

15. In addition to the two background documents presented to the Conference by UNEP, 2/ two other contributions were made with the assistance of UNEP:

(a) A special issue of the Journal AMBIO on water, prepared jointly with the Royal Swedish Academy of Science; 3/

(b) A summary report on the project "Water Development and Environment in Latin America" (ADEMA), 4/ which describes techniques for assessing the environmental impact of water resources development, analyses methods and costs of coping with these and ways of collecting and disseminating data on water resources management, and indicates what should be done to improve training.

16. The following recommendations in the action plan and in the resolutions passed by the Conference are of direct relevance to the environment programme and indeed appear very much in line with the proposed activities:

(a) To improve communication between international river commissions so as to promote the exchange of experience, assist co-ordination of activities on shared river basins and encourage greater awareness of environmental considerations in water resources management;

2/ E/CONF.70/A.20 and A.26.

3/ AMBIO Vol.VI number 1 1977.

4/ E/CONF.70/A.18.

(b) To emphasize the improvement of rural water resources, river and lake basin development and attention to ecological factors so as to combat desertification;

(c) To establish institutional arrangements for international co-operation in the water sector and to request intensification of efforts by the United Nations system to assist Governments in this field.

C. ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

2. Integrated approach to environment and development, including ecodevelopment (paragraphs 404-408)

17. UNEP and UNCTAD have been undertaking a study to identify trade barriers and/or increased production costs which developing countries might face as a result of environmental measures, and to work out remedial action. The results of this study were reviewed in Geneva (15-18 February 1977) and proposals for further action were drawn up, including: country, sectoral and product case studies; assistance to developing countries in examining how to overcome export problems created by environmental measures, and also how to maximize the opportunities so opened up; the development of a global early warning system and related consultation procedures on environmental regulations affecting developing countries' exports; studies of criteria, guidelines and principles on the application of environmental policies and measures in international trade; and studies of problems facing developing countries as a result of environment-related international standards. These proposals are currently under consideration by UNEP.

18. A workshop on ecodevelopment took place in Colombia (7 March - 2 April 1977) on the site of the Santa Marta pilot project in ecodevelopment. Those involved included the Government of Colombia, the International Centre for Training in Environmental Sciences (CIFCA), ECLA, UNESCO/MAB and UNEP. The workshop compared theoretical concepts of ecodevelopment with the existing situation on the project site. It recommended that a long-term environmental management plan be drawn up for the area.

4. Environmentally sound and appropriate technologies (paragraph 432)

19. The UNEP/UNIDO seminar on the implications of technology choice in the African sugar industry took place in Nairobi (18-22 April 1977). One of its main purposes was to consider the criteria for selecting environmentally sound technologies for sugar production. The meeting agreed that there was ample scope to adapt sugar technology to take account of environmental factors. Some of the specific recommendations were that:

(a) The environmental impact of irrigation for sugar growing should be taken into account and planned for;

(b) Especially in the design of large-scale sugar production processes, it was necessary to take measures to protect the environment, e.g. by water treatment plants and separation of wastes;

(c) Consideration should be given to the reuse of wastes, for example by manufacturing charcoal briquettes from bagasse as an alternative to the destruction of trees;

(d) In creating new sugar plantations, accommodation should be provided for displaced people in properly planned human settlements.

5. Industry and environment (paragraphs 453 and 457)

20. The fifth in the series of industrial seminars, on the petroleum industry (Paris, 29 March - 1 April 1977), was concerned with the environmental problems arising from oil exploration and production, transportation and refining. Marine pollution by hydrocarbons and air pollution by sulphur oxide were among the principal environmental hazards discussed, and the meeting also examined the need for guidelines and regulations. Follow-up activities are now being developed.

21. An ad hoc expert group meeting on environmental considerations in industrial location took place in Nairobi (4-7 April 1977) as a first step in the development of activities in this area. The group stressed the importance of including environmental considerations in determining the location of industry, and proposed a number of programme activities for the development of guidelines which could be used to ensure that such considerations are taken into account.

D. OCEANS

The Mediterranean (paragraph 500)

22. In co-operation with WHO, UNEP convened an intergovernmental consultation on a draft protocol for the protection of the Mediterranean Sea against pollution from land-based sources (Athens, 7-11 February 1977).

23. The meeting recommended principles for a draft protocol which are contained in an annex to its report. ^{5/} The meeting agreed that the technical experts who are to meet in Geneva during September 1977 to review the results of the joint project on pollutants from land-based sources (ECE/UNIDO/FAO/UNESCO/WHO/IAEA and UNEP) should also consider in detail the technical aspects of the protocol on land-based sources. The recommendations of this meeting should be presented to a second intergovernmental consultation in October, to be held in Italy, which will in turn report its conclusions to the intergovernmental meeting of Mediterranean coastal States at Monaco in November.

^{5/} See document UNEP/IG.6/6, which will be available to the Governing Council.

Chapter IV

SUPPORTING MEASURES

A. ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION (paragraphs 563-565)

24. A joint UNEP/UNESCO consultation, followed by a working group in which the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and IUCN participated, took place in Paris (14-18 March) to review plans for the intergovernmental conference on environmental education to be held in Tbilisi from 14 to 26 October. On 28-29 April, UNESCO convened an interagency meeting for the same purpose. UNEP and UNESCO are working closely in the preparation of conference documents.

C. INFORMATION (paragraphs 586-605)

25. Following an in-house review, it is considered opportune and necessary to strengthen UNEP's information capacity, and in particular its capacity at the regional level. For this purpose information officers will be recruited to serve in UNEP's regional and liaison offices. They will adapt UNEP information material to local conditions, ensure the greatest possible media coverage of UNEP concerns and activities in the region, improve UNEP's capacity to monitor coverage of environmental issues in the region's media, establish a network of contacts who can enhance the impact of UNEP's public information effort, and advise on the direction of UNEP's information activities.

26. As a result, the Executive Director has included an additional action for support from the Fund of UNEP:

- Regional information support programme.

D. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE 6/

27. At the meeting of the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions in Geneva in July 1976, UNEP's representative suggested that UNEP might be able to assist the commissions to establish appropriate machinery within their secretariats to deal with environmental issues. 7/ This was discussed further during joint programming with ECE (July 1976) and with ECA, ECLA and ESCAP (February and March 1977). 8/ The outcome is that each commission has agreed to strengthen its efforts to give appropriate attention to the environmental dimension of regional, sub-regional and national activities within its purview, and to establish an environmental unit which will have among its functions the task of ensuring that all the commission's programmes are responsive to environmental considerations. UNEP agreed to assist in meeting the costs of such a unit for two years.

6/ There is no reference in the text of UNEP/GC/90 to the subject dealt with in paras. 27 and 28.

7/ See the report of the Secretary-General on the meetings of the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions (document E/5835), para. 37.

8/ Joint programming will take place with ECWA later in 1977.

28. As a result, the Executive Director has included an additional action for support from the Fund of UNEP:

- Strengthening the environmental capacity of the United Nations regional commissions.

Chapter V

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT INCLUDING ENVIRONMENTAL LAW

A. ENVIRONMENTAL LAW (paragraph 639 (b))

29. A meeting took place in Nairobi (23 February - 4 March 1977) of governmental and other experts on liability for pollution and other environmental damage, and compensation for such damage. 9/ The group provisionally recommended that UNEP should undertake studies in the following areas:

- (a) Liability and compensation for damage arising from marine, air and river pollution;
- (b) Special regimes for very hazardous activities;
- (c) Responsibility and liability of States and their nationals for environmental damage beyond the limits of national jurisdiction;
- (d) Improved remedies for those who are victims of transfrontier environmental damage;
- (e) Techniques of preventing and correcting such damage;
- (f) Rules and procedures to guide the conduct of States in this area;
- (g) Elaboration of standards to determine liability. The group also gave its support to any study of liability or compensation initiated by other international organizations, in co-operation with UNEP.

30. In deciding how to respond to these recommendations, account has been taken of the need to concentrate UNEP's resources and efforts, the decision of the Governing Council that oceans should be a priority area for UNEP, the desire of States to have regional conventions on the seas which they share, the need to help these States prepare the necessary regimes of liability and compensation, and the importance of developing general principles to protect international commons. As a result the following three topics have been selected for study during 1977-1979:

- (a) Liability and compensation for damage from marine pollution caused by off-shore mining;

9/ See document UNEP/WG.8/3, which will be available to the Governing Council.

(b) Liability and compensation for damage from marine pollution caused by land-based sources;

(c) Responsibility and liability of States and their nationals for pollution or other damage caused to the environment beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.

B. ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT
(paragraph 659)

31. A document entitled "Development of an Action Programme for Sound Environmental Management of the Wider Caribbean Area" was signed by UNEP and ECLA in February 1977, thus paving the way for action. The office of the co-ordinator is now being established.
