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## THE TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDS OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

### Report of the Executive Director

#### I. INTRODUCTION

1. In paragraph 4 (1) of its resolution 3326 (XXIX) of 16 December 1974, the General Assembly requested the Executive Director:

"To consult the Governments of developing countries regarding the problems and matters related to the environment on which they would be interested in training and technical assistance, and to submit a report, with the replies received, to the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme at its fourth session, together with a summary of the experience achieved thus far in this area, in order to formulate a training and assistance programme based on the specific needs of that group of countries".

2. The Executive Director's response to this request was contained in document UNEP/GC/81, submitted to the Governing Council at its fourth session. As a result of a review of the document, the Council, by decision 68 (IV) of 13 April 1976, requested the Executive Director to pursue further the study called for in the General Assembly resolution, and to present his recommendations based on that study to the Governing Council at its fifth session. As indicated in document UNEP/GC/90, paragraphs 575 and 617, the completion of the study, which is reported upon in the present document, represents activity A under Training and Activity E under Technical assistance.

#### II. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDS

3. Although there is often a degree of overlap, it is helpful to distinguish between the need for technical assistance to enable a country to participate in a UNEP global or regional programme activity, for

example in a monitoring programme, IRS, or a regional seas action plan, and that which is felt by a country in relation to its own environmental problems. The first type of technical assistance is catered for in the course of designing the programme activity, as explained in paragraphs 614-616 of document UNEP/GC/90, and is not systematically covered in the study carried out by the Executive Director, which is concerned with the needs of developing countries as they perceive them.

4. The relationship between the need for training and that for technical assistance also requires clarification. For the purpose of the study, training has been treated as a part of technical assistance, which also includes advisory services.

### III. THE STUDY

5. As indicated in document UNEP/GC/81, the study began in July 1975 with correspondence with the UNDP resident representatives, but it was not possible to draw firm conclusions from the replies received, partly because of the uncertainties created by the financial difficulties which beset UNDP during the last quarter of 1975. Moreover, it was assumed that the identification of needs was not so much suited to a single survey undertaken at one point in time, but required the development of a mechanism to ensure that the changing needs of countries were kept continually under review. The means which have been useful in supplying guidance on the technical assistance needs of developing countries are as follows:

(a) Direct contact with Governments, in particular through visits to countries by the Executive Director and UNEP's regional representatives;

(b) Country missions undertaken by the regional advisory teams attached to UNEP's regional offices, and visits by UNEP consultants to advise on environmental problems (see UNEP/GC/90, paragraph 611);

(c) The review being undertaken to provide information for the technical assistance clearing house, which has revealed those problems and matters for which Governments believe services offered by donors, through the clearing house, would be relevant. This review has now covered 70 countries (see UNEP/GC/90, paragraph 610);

(d) The preliminary assessment of the environmental aspects of 71 UNDP country programmes undertaken by UNEP in order to keep abreast of development activities related to the environment and to influence the development process at critical points (see UNEP/GC/90, paragraph 619);

(e) Surveys undertaken with support from the Fund of UNEP, for example the review of environmental legislation and machinery in Africa, carried out in 1976 (see UNEP/GC/90, paragraph 612).

The environmental units, which the regional commissions of the United Nations are establishing or strengthening with UNEP support (see UNEP/GC/90/Add.1, paragraphs 27-28) will, amongst other things, keep the regional environmental situation under review. This may be expected to generate a greater awareness of national environmental problems, and to reveal the environmental technical assistance requirements of countries.

#### IV. THE OUTCOME OF THE STUDY

6. Some difficulties have been encountered in analysing the requests and suggestions for technical assistance brought to UNEP's attention through the above channels. For example, some requests and suggestions have not really been for technical assistance at all, but for projects with large and expensive equipment components for which funding from technical assistance would be inappropriate. Also, several Governments and agencies have tended to see technical assistance in the field of the environment as a means of financing the costs of impact studies, ecological analyses, etc., which should form an integral part of the associated development projects or programmes. It is important that Governments and donor agencies should accept the costs of such studies as a normal part of planning; in the long run the expenditure involved should pay for itself through better designed projects and programmes.
7. With these qualifications in mind, it is possible to come to some general conclusions about the subjects for which developing countries have a particular need for technical assistance. Well over a third of all requests and suggestions are for assistance in the following areas: national overviews of environmental problems, with specific emphasis on preservation of natural resources; the development of national environmental legislation; advice on environmental machinery, including suitable administrative and governmental structures for dealing with environmental problems; and general guidance on the incorporation of environmental management principles into the development process.
8. There is also a considerable need for technical assistance in a number of specialized fields:
  - (a) The control of water and air pollution;
  - (b) The development of public health systems, in particular cheap and simple techniques for sewage and waste disposal;
  - (c) Coastal erosion and the control of marine pollution;
  - (d) The environmental impact of large development projects, such as those affecting river basins, dams, swamps, drainage, industrial plants and power projects, including nuclear power;
  - (e) Conservation of natural resources, including soil, water, forests and wildlife, and the establishment of parks and reserves.

9. More specifically, an important theme in technical assistance is the promotion of national self-sufficiency through training. This manifests itself in the interests shown in the training of specialized staff and of trainers and teachers, both in education generally and in those activities, e.g. engineering or agriculture, which have a particular relevance to the environment. It is evident also in the desire of developing countries to receive technical assistance which will improve and strengthen their institutions, especially those which can provide training for a region or sub-region. Finally, it is apparent in the desire of developing countries to exchange staff in their own training institutions with those from institutions in the developed world and in other developing countries.

10. There are some difficulties in responding satisfactorily to the technical assistance requirements which have been brought to light. Apart from the obvious problem of funding, difficulties also arise because the required know-how and experts may not be available, and because some technical assistance requests, for example for an open-ended training commitment, carry long-term financial implications which are extremely difficult to support.

11. As explained in document UNEP/GC/90, paragraph 621 (b), UNEP has been developing a variety of mechanisms for providing the technical assistance which developing countries need. These include essentially the regional advisory teams and short-term consultancies. It is also hoped that the clearing-house facility can be further developed and that specific arrangements with other parts of the United Nations system, such as those at present under discussion with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (Division of Public Administration and Finance), can provide additional advice in those areas which have already been identified as of special interest to developing countries, i.e. assistance on administrative matters and on environmental law, for which UNEP received a specific mandate in Governing Council decision 66 (IV). Moreover, similar arrangements have been developed with IUCN for requests for technical assistance in the field of nature conservation and national parks, and may also be developed with other United Nations agencies in their own areas of technical competence, for example with IMCO in relation to marine pollution (see UNEP/GC/90, paragraph 474). Finally, the development of study tours, which it is intended to extend to cover new subjects and new countries, offers a further means of providing technical assistance to developing countries. The potential of the extensive technical assistance programme established under IRS for developing national capabilities in the field of environment should also be borne in mind.

#### V. SUGGESTED ACTION BY THE GOVERNING COUNCIL

12. The Governing Council may wish to indicate its agreement with the steps already taken and planned to meet the needs of developing countries for technical assistance in the field of the environment, and to invite the Executive Director to improve these mechanisms so that the technical assistance requirements are kept under constant review and the international community is encouraged to be increasingly responsive to the needs of developing countries in this respect. It is suggested that a decision on the subject might be incorporated in any general decision taken on the programme.