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GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM

POLICY STATEMENT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The twenty-first session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum takes place at an important juncture for humanity as we stand at the threshold of a new millennium, which provides new challenges and opportunities, but also presents new risks. The session comes in the wake of the historic United Nations Millennium Summit and the adoption of the Millennium Declaration by heads of State and government, as well as the General Assembly's decision to convene the World Summit on Sustainable Development in South Africa in 2002 to review progress made in implementing the goals adopted in 1992 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and to reinvigorate the global commitment to sustainable development. It also follows the sixth special session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, at which environment ministers adopted the Malmö Declaration, setting the course for an evolutionary, implementation-centred approach to tackling the environmental challenges of sustainable development facing us in the twenty-first century.

2. "We have at our disposal the human and material resources to achieve sustainable development, not as an abstract concept but as a concrete reality". This is the crux of the conclusion of the Malmö Declaration. With this guiding conviction, we must concentrate on a number of important issues at this session.

3. We must take stock of the progress and constraints in UNEP's work since the twentieth session of the Governing Council and the fifth special session of the Council in May 1998, at which a series of decisions were taken designed to reorient and revitalize the Programme and to focus on a limited number of strategic priority issues that would have the most impact within the context of a changing international environment, both in terms of addressing the most pressing environmental issues facing the international community, as well as strengthening the role of UNEP as a policy forum. In this context I am presenting for the consideration and approval of the Council UNEP's programme of work and budget for the biennium 2002-2003 (UNEP/GC.21/6), which continues and substantiates this approach.

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4. It is also necessary to concentrate on providing concrete guidance for developing the road map to the World Summit on Sustainable Development from the environmental perspective, closely integrated with the overall preparations being undertaken through the Commission on Sustainable Development. The international community today faces new systemic challenges which if not addressed adequately could endanger the future stability of our development path. Globalization, the growing gap between rich and poor and its implications for the environment and for security, the growing need for cooperation and the increasing realization of our interdependence, and the need for tolerance, all point to the need to design new ways of addressing new requirements.

5. Progress in the current reform context, however, continues to be made. From an institutional perspective, the comprehensive series of reform measures designed to enhance coherent and coordinated action within the United Nations system on environment issues, supported by the Governing Council (in decision 20/17 of 5 February 1999) and the General Assembly (in resolution 53/242 of 28 July 1999), are being implemented, most significantly with the establishment of the annual Global Ministerial Environment Forum and the Environmental Management Group (EMG). The inaugural Global Ministerial Environment Forum - the sixth special session of the UNEP Governing Council - held in Malmö, Sweden, in May last year, provided an opportunity for environment ministers to discuss, review and take action on important and emerging policy issues in the field of the environment. As the current session will, the Forum served as a platform for the high-level consideration of priority issues on the environmental agenda, allowing for debate, in-depth discussions, interaction with major groups and structured efforts to produce innovative strategies and provide the policy guidance needed in the environmental field.

6. At the inter-organizational level, the EMG, as a new instrument to help strengthen links between the various United Nations organizations through an issue management approach at the working level, held its first meeting on 22 January 2001 in Geneva. It discussed coordinated United Nations system-wide responses to the specific issues of: education and training in the field of environment and human settlements; harmonization of national reporting; waste minimization and handling; and enforcement and compliance, including liability. The EMG decided to establish two issue management groups: one on education, training and awareness-raising, with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as lead agency; and the other on harmonization of national reporting, initially with respect to biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements with UNEP as lead agency. The Group also considered the possibility of collectively launching a campaign to raise awareness of environment and sustainable development issues in the lead-up to the 2002 summit.

II. THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

7. The immensity of the environmental challenges facing the international community requires urgent solutions and international cooperation on the scale necessary to make sustainable development a reality. This was a central message that the United Nations Secretary-General conveyed in his seminal report to the Millennium Assembly, "We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century". In the search for these solutions, we must contend with the rapid globalization of financial and capital markets with their attendant instabilities, the rapid spread of technological innovations, the growing strength of and new modes of expression by civil society at all levels, and major changes in the content and direction of international trade. There is increasing concern that international trade is acting as an instrument that, far from narrowing the gap between rich and poor, can actually further widen it. The potential problems for the environment posed by globalization and the rapid growth of international trade are also a central concern. UNEP has therefore enhanced its working relationship with both the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to address the crucial nexus between trade and environment.

8. Globalisation, in seemingly creating a global village, also brings with it challenges in terms of preserving our diversity - not only the biological diversity of our planet, but also our cultural diversity, for the two are intimately linked. We have learnt that parts of the world with the most biodiversity also have the highest concentrations of native cultures, and that the extinction of these cultures, including the

unprecedented and alarming loss of linguistic diversity, could lead to further environmental degradation and loss of traditional knowledge for the management of the environment. Traditional cultures have a priceless relationship with the Earth, solidified through time and ritual, based on a deep attachment to the land, and beliefs and intuitions about the nature of the environment as a dynamic force to be embraced by the human imagination. It is imperative that we stop and realize that, by letting a vast archive of knowledge and expertise slip away, we reduce the human repertoire of adaptive responses to the problems that confront all humanity, and that the loss of cultural and biological diversity has consequences for stability and tolerance both within and between societies. Thus we must acknowledge the need to preserve “diversity in one world”, protecting our cultural heritage, based on our spiritual values.

9. The need to address environmental challenges in all their complexity is increasingly being infused into our collective consciousness, as reflected in:

- The strides that are being made in further developing international agreements and environmental law;
- The unprecedented coverage being devoted by the media to the toll that is being exacted on the health of the planet and consequently on human health, and the resultant impact on public opinion;
- The innovations and initiatives being undertaken by the private sector in response to changing consumer attitudes;
- The vibrancy of the non-governmental sector;
- The attention accorded to environmental issues in national and local political processes.

10. Reports such as the Global Environment Outlook 2000, issued by UNEP to wide acclaim in September 1999, provide a compelling assessment of the serious nature of the environmental threats that can hinder sustainable development. Similarly, the report World Resources 2000-2001 – People and Ecosystems: The Fraying Web of Life, produced by the World Resources Institute, UNEP, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank and released in September 2000, stresses that as increased resource demands continue to cause global ecosystems to deteriorate, the result could be devastating for human development and the welfare of all species. The report, a two-year effort by 175 scientists, finds that:

- 50 per cent of the world's wetlands and almost as much forest land have been lost in the last century;
- Fishing fleets are 40 per cent larger than the oceans can sustain;
- Nearly 70 per cent of major marine fish stocks are over fished;
- Soil degradation has affected two-thirds of all agricultural land in the last 50 years;
- Dams, canals and other diversions fragment almost 60 per cent of the world's largest rivers;
- 20 per cent of freshwater species are extinct, threatened or endangered globally.

11. The report presents the results of the pilot phase of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, a major international collaborative effort to map the health of our planet, generate new information, develop methodological tools, inform public policies and increase public awareness. It is an initiative in which UNEP plays a key role, which was also highlighted in the Secretary-General's report to the Millennium Assembly.

12. The gravity and urgency of the environmental challenges facing us was also poignantly underscored by the environment ministers who attended last May's inaugural Global Ministerial Environment Forum. In the Malmö Declaration ministers underscored that the root causes of global environmental degradation are embedded in social and economic problems such as pervasive poverty, unsustainable production and consumption patterns, inequity in distribution of wealth, and the debt burden.

13. The Malmö Declaration also served as a direct input to the Millennium Assembly and Summit, and many of the themes were echoed in the Millennium Declaration, adopted by heads of State and government on 8 September 2000. The Millennium Declaration outlines a series of fundamental values considered essential to international relations in the twenty-first century, one of these being “respect for nature”. It also

sets ambitious targets for reducing poverty, promoting peace and development in Africa, protecting the environment, including with regard to one of the defining issues of our time - global climate change - and furthering respect for human rights and international law. Collectively the United Nations system is now focusing on identifying key interventions and possible initiatives to help implement the clear goals and priorities that were set at the Millennium Summit, to bring about concrete results in order to ensure that the benefits of globalization are felt by all.

14. UNEP is developing strong partnerships with other parts of the United Nations, as an integral part of the system, in pursuing the goals of the Millennium Declaration. For example:

- Programmatic linkages and cooperation continue to be strengthened with the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) (Habitat) beyond long-standing initiatives such as the Sustainable Cities Programme, particularly through the work of the UNEP/Habitat Joint Unit. UNEP and Habitat have also worked in partnership with regard to emergency responses and in post-conflict situations (i.e. the Balkans Task Force, and missions to China, Guinea, Mozambique, Turkey and Venezuela);
- The enhanced relationship with WTO and UNCTAD allows for a more comprehensive approach to addressing the nexus between trade and environment;
- Renewed efforts are under way to translate UNEP's environmental policy guidance role into field-level application through enhanced cooperation with UNDP and the United Nations regional commissions;
- A memorandum of understanding was signed in August 1999 with the World Health Organization to combat the increasing threat of environmentally linked diseases;
- A memorandum of understanding was signed in April 1999 with the United Nations Population Fund to address population, poverty and environment linkages;
- Another memorandum of understanding has been agreed to define UNEP's cooperation with the United Nations Office for Project Services;
- Further collaborative activities are being developed with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), particularly in the field of children's environmental health;
- The International Programme on Chemical Safety, an intersectoral coordinated and scientifically based programme of the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNEP and WHO, continues to implement activities related to chemical safety;
- UNEP is working with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on emergency response.

15. UNEP has also been focusing on implementing the Malmö Declaration. With regard to its long-standing relationship with the private sector, UNEP has continued to develop the environmental components of the Secretary-General's innovative "Global Compact". It has also strengthened its ongoing initiatives with the financial sector, telecommunications operators and suppliers, sustainable tourism and the mining sector. UNEP also continues to support the Global Reporting Initiative, a multi-stakeholder undertaking aimed at developing a common framework for public reporting on the three linked aspects of sustainable business practices – the economic, social and environmental. We are pleased to be able to demonstrate progress in this dynamic area through our side event at this session on "The Global Compact in Practice". With regard to civil society, UNEP has embarked on a process to examine procedures and practices for the involvement, participation and constructive engagement of major groups active in the field of the environment. In order to work towards forging such enhanced collaboration, UNEP's newly established Civil Society and Non-governmental Organizations Unit organized a forum for non-governmental organizations in conjunction with the sixth special session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, and a similar segment is being held at the current session.

16. Substantive contributions have also been made by UNEP in preparation for the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, to be held from 16 to 27 April 2001 in New York, which will address the issues of atmosphere, energy, information for decision-making and participation, international cooperation for an enabling environment, and transport. As task manager with the World Meteorological Organization, UNEP prepared the Secretary-General's report on atmosphere for the consideration of the

Commission, and contributed to the documents prepared on other substantive areas. The report on information for decision-making was based on the outcome of a seminar on the issue co-hosted by UNEP and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs in Ottawa in September 2000.

17. An important upcoming landmark will be the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, for which UNEP, as mandated by the Governing Council and the General Assembly, is undertaking a range of substantive preparations as an integral component of the United Nations system's preparatory process. Continued assistance is being provided to Governments in reviewing the implementation of Agenda 21 at the local and national levels, in particular through increased collaboration with the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives in the future. There is a strong involvement with the United Nations regional commissions in the regional preparatory processes, which include round tables involving government and civil society. Within the United Nations system, an inter-agency task force was established, chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General and composed of the executive heads of UNEP, UNDP and Department of Economic and Social Affairs, to provide initial policy guidance for the preparatory process. Furthermore, UNEP, as task manager for a number of various thematic and cross-sectoral areas in Agenda 21, is preparing the review documentation to be submitted to the preparatory process.

18. At the intergovernmental level, UNEP reported to the General Assembly through the Secretary-General on the "Contribution of UNEP to the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21" (A/55/447 and Corr.1). In resolution 55/200, the Assembly welcomed the Governing Council's decision SS.VI/3 on the subject and stressed that UNEP, as the principal body in the field of the environment within the United Nations system, should continue to play an important role in the implementation of Agenda 21 and in the preparation of the 10-year review of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Furthermore, in its resolution 55/199 on the 10-year review, the Assembly welcomed the work undertaken by UNEP, UNDP, the regional commissions, secretariats of conventions related to the Rio Conference and institutions such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to support preparatory activities in a coordinated and mutually reinforcing way. The General Assembly invited UNEP to participate fully in the 10-year review, including in the preparation of reports for submission to the tenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

III. AREAS OF CONCENTRATION

19. At its fifth special session the Governing Council endorsed five areas of concentration for UNEP: environmental information, assessment and early warning; enhanced coordination of environmental conventions and the development of environmental policy instruments; freshwater; technology transfer and industry; and support to Africa. The significant progress that has been made in all these areas, as well as on the challenges that are already visible on the horizon, provides ample evidence that taking this strategic direction was indeed the correct decision, and that UNEP should continue its engagement in these priority areas.

A. Environmental information, assessment and early warning

20. The assessment of the state of the environment and early warning with regard to new and emerging perils has become increasingly important as the degradation of our natural environment continues at an unabated pace. To monitor these new dimensions and to propose remedial strategies, information, monitoring and assessment of the environment must remain a priority for UNEP's work.

21. Equipped with a comprehensive, integrated and forward-looking strategy in the area of environmental information, assessment and early warning, UNEP has strengthened its capacity to fulfil its mandate to keep under review the state of the environment, building on the technical capacity of a network of centres of excellence in developed and developing countries. Particularly significant in this regard was the formal integration into UNEP of the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC). Possibilities are also being explored for the establishment of centres of excellence in other key

environmental areas, such as land use and land cover, requiring consolidated monitoring and assessment of such issues as land degradation.

22. UNEP has continued to assess and disseminate information on the state of the global environment, and to highlight emerging issues, through the Global Environment Outlook 2000 (GEO-2000) report. Companion reports to GEO-2000 dealing with the three major regions where small island States predominate – the Caribbean, the Western Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean – were also released, as was a youth version entitled Pachamama – Our Earth, Our Future. Preparations for the GEO-3 report have been initiated; it is expected to be completed in 2002 and to provide a definitive assessment of the global environmental situation for use at the 10-year review of the outcome of the Rio Conference. The GEO-3 process, which is gathering and synthesizing the knowledge of more than 850 experts in some 35 scientific institutions around the world, will take a 30-year retrospective and 30-year forward-looking perspective, and will aim to reframe the way the international community understands and responds to the environment in the new millennium.

23. Capacity and activities in the area of early warning, encompassing a range of vulnerability analyses, risk assessments and other projective assessments, have been enhanced. Through its Global Resource Information Database (GRID) centres, UNEP will enhance its early warning capability with regard to emerging environmental issues and threats, including through the development of a number of data sets in the areas of population and the terrestrial environment, transboundary resource issues and natural hazards. Additional data sets are being developed to cover such areas as refugees and the environment as well as the emerging threat to global freshwater. UNEP has also been tasked with coordinating the Working Group on Early Warning of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force set up under the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. Work is continuing on environmental indicators and indices, especially under the GEO process, as well as a contribution to the system-wide work programme on the development of sustainable development indicators.

24. UNEPInfoterra, UNEP's global environmental information exchange network, is also being reformed to ensure better public access to information, thereby enhancing the capacity of the public to participate in environmental decision-making. UNEP is working with public and private-sector partners to develop and provide worldwide access to environmental information as well as to support the undertaking of strategic environmental assessment for well-informed decision-making through a global environmental information system (UNEPnet). UNEPnet, which is being launched at this session of the Governing Council, will provide a public platform for UNEP, United Nations partners and collaborating institutions and centres, such as GEO Collaborating Centres, to share environmental information.

25. In terms of response to environmental emergencies, joint technical assessment and assistance missions were sent to: China (floods), Kenya (El Niño study and drought), Turkey (earthquakes), Venezuela (floods and mudslides), Guinea (refugees), Ethiopia (forest fires), Mozambique (floods), Albania, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Yugoslavia (environmental effects of the conflict), and Hungary, Romania, and Yugoslavia (cyanide spill). The most recent example is the November 2000 field assessment mission to Kosovo, which collected samples in an effort to determine whether the use of depleted uranium during the Balkans conflict may pose risks to human health or the environment. UNEP has also developed a Strategic Framework on Emergency Prevention, Preparedness, Assessment, Response and Mitigation (UNEP/GC.21/3/Add.1, annex).

B. Enhanced coordination of environmental conventions and development of environmental policy instruments

26. Binding international conventions now exist in areas as diverse as climate change, biological diversity and biosafety (Cartagena Protocol), desertification, prior informed consent relating to trade in hazardous chemicals and pesticides, and now persistent organic pollutants (POPs). These conventions are being systematically developed and concretized through the negotiation and adoption of protocols. It is also important to note that the Århus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters is an important step in integrating civil society

concerns in the European region. While this represents an impressive record of achievements on the part of the international community, it also raises the issue of the need for continuing policy coherence among various instruments that exist in these areas, at both the inter-agency and intergovernmental levels.

27. A major aspect of UNEP's enhanced mandate is to strengthen coherence and complementarities between environmental and environment-related institutional arrangements. UNEP is putting increased emphasis on facilitating collaboration and identifying synergies among conventions. In cooperation with the governing bodies of environmental and environment-related conventions, a series of initiatives has been undertaken to develop coherent linkages among the conventions and promote their effective implementation, primarily through the establishment and work of the Division of Environmental Conventions.

28. UNEP's role and work in this field have been acknowledged by the General Assembly when considering the issue of coordination among institutional arrangements related to environment and sustainable development. At its fifty-fifth session, the Assembly considered a report by the Secretary-General (prepared by UNEP, with inputs from a number of convention secretariats), which provides an overview of recent actions taken by the convention secretariats and relevant organizations to maximize benefits from complementarities in the implementation of the conventions related to environment and sustainable development. The report highlights the translation of potential synergies into concrete actions and more efficient ways to achieve the objectives of the conventions and those of sustainable development, especially at the national and local levels, and also addresses emerging issues of common concern for global and regional agreements such as the cross-cutting issue of trade and environment. In its resolution 55/198, the Assembly encouraged the conferences of parties, convention secretariats and UNEP to continue their work in enhancing complementarities among them and to strengthen cooperation with a view to facilitating progress in the implementation of the conventions at the international, regional and national levels. The involvement of the EMG will play a crucial role in this regard and should contribute in providing integrated contributions to the preparatory process of the 10-year review of the outcome of the Rio Conference.

29. UNEP has accorded the highest priority to the revitalization of the regional seas conventions and action plans, building bridges between these and related international environmental agreements. Substantial progress has been made, through two global meetings of regional seas secretariats, in, first, promoting and facilitating horizontal cooperation; second, integrating their work into the implementation, development and use of Global International Waters Assessment (GIWA); third, strengthening their capacity in the implementation of the newly revitalized Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities; fourth, identifying priority areas in their work programmes, particularly in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, which require programmatic support from UNEP; and fifth, strengthening their information management capacities, including improved exchange of information among and with global environmental conventions and related international agreements.

30. UNEP also organized a series of meetings addressing trade issues under multilateral environmental agreements to discuss potential synergies and mutual supportiveness of trade and environment rules and institutions. These meetings contributed to the solidification of the positions of such agreements in their presentations to the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment. In addition, a UNEP/WTO meeting was held in Geneva in October 2000 on enhancing synergies and mutual supportiveness of environmental conventions and WTO through their secretariats.

31. To promote the effective implementation of multilateral environmental agreements, UNEP is currently developing guidelines for enhancing compliance and for effective cooperation in combating environmental crime. The guidelines will serve as a tool for governments, convention secretariats and all those interested in such agreements. The draft is being reviewed and will be shared with governments for further review and comment. The development of tools and incentives to trigger compliance and enforcement occupies a prominent place in UNEP's work programme. UNEP has also established a database of enforcement focal points, which is updated regularly and shared globally. However, to date only 72 governments have provided information on their focal points. The international community will need as a matter of priority to reflect in the near future on the issue of liability and compensation for environmental

damage. There are a number of global and regional agreements on the subject, but many of them have not yet entered into force. Efforts should be made to encourage States to become party to them.

32. Considerable progress has been made in the development of international environmental law. In October 2000, UNEP officials and senior legal experts from 70 Governments adopted a draft UNEP strategic programme on environmental law for the next decade, the Montevideo Programme III, which is before you for your consideration at this session (see UNEP/GC.21/INF/3). The Montevideo Programme has served as the foundation of UNEP's activities in the progressive development of environmental law for the past two decades. While UNEP is continuing to promote the development, codification and implementation of environmental law at the national, regional and global levels, the Montevideo Programme III is expected to further strengthen UNEP's environmental law programme, containing components addressing:

- Compliance and enforcement; capacity-building; prevention and mitigation of environmental damage;
- Avoidance and settlement of international environmental disputes;
- Strengthening and development of international environmental law;
- Harmonization and coordination; public participation;
- Information technology;
- Innovative approaches to environmental law.

33. The strategic plan of the Montevideo Programme considers sectoral environmental issues (such as freshwater resources, coastal and marine ecosystems, soils, forests, biological diversity, pollution prevention and control, production and consumption patterns, and environmental emergencies and natural disasters) and also focuses on the linkages between environmental and other fields (such as trade, security and military activities). The Programme will therefore assist UNEP's efforts to enhance the integration of the environmental dimension of sustainable development in the programmes of the United Nations system.

34. Steady progress has also been made in the implementation and advancement of existing environmental conventions, and the development and negotiation of new ones. Governments, at the fifth and final negotiating session held in South Africa under UNEP auspices, recently concluded negotiations on an international treaty on persistent organic pollutants (POPs). The treaty provides the international community with a strong international regime for promoting global action on POPs, and a sound and effective treaty that can be updated and expanded over the coming decades to maintain the best possible protection against POPs. While the control measures will apply to an initial list of 12 chemicals, a POPs Review Committee will consider additional candidates for the list on a regular basis. This will ensure that the treaty remains dynamic and responsive to new scientific findings. The treaty will be formally adopted and signed by ministers and other plenipotentiaries at a diplomatic conference in Stockholm in May 2001. Given the positive developments in the general area of chemicals, we are pleased to be able to dedicate special attention to this issue at this session.

35. Headway has been made in other parts of the global chemicals agenda, with the adoption of the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, which was opened for signature in September 1998. In the field of hazardous waste management, the Protocol on Liability and Compensation to the Basel Convention was adopted in December 1999, at the tenth anniversary meeting of the treaty's parties. The Protocol, the result of negotiations begun in 1993, establishes rules on liability and compensation to address the damage caused by accidental spills of hazardous wastes during export or import.

36. Significant progress has also been made under the Convention on Biological Diversity, with the adoption of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety at the beginning of 2000. The Protocol, which is the first global treaty that reaffirms, incorporates and operationalizes the precautionary principle enunciated in the Rio Declaration, outlines procedures to deal with issues arising from the transboundary movement, transit, handling and use of genetically modified organisms – and commodities containing them – that may adversely affect the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity or pose risks to human health and the environment.

C. Freshwater

37. In Malmö, environment ministers committed themselves to decreasing poverty by half by 2015 without degrading the environment. In the Millennium Declaration, adopted three months after Malmö, heads of State and government decided in addition to halve the proportion of people who are unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water. Thus, UNEP's concentration on freshwater is and remains timely and highly topical. The link between poverty, health and the environment is nowhere closer than with regard to the freshwater challenge.

38. Study after study adds to the mounting international consensus that one of the critical challenges to the sustainability of our environment, as well as our current development path, is the issue of freshwater. According to GEO-2000, two thirds of the Earth's population will live in water-stressed conditions by 2025 if current consumption patterns continue. Thus, as was underscored in the Millennium Declaration, there is a need "to stop the unsustainable exploitation of water resources by developing water management strategies at the regional, national and local levels, which promote both equitable access and adequate supplies".

39. In its commitment to help avert the impending global water crisis, UNEP has been developing a water policy and strategy, which takes a holistic regional and global view of water management, focusing on three key areas - assessment, management and coordination. Its goals are to:

- Achieve greater global understanding of freshwater, coastal and marine environments by conducting environmental assessments in priority areas;
- Raise awareness of the importance and consequences of unsustainable water use;
- Adopt integrated management plans for freshwater systems and their related coastal and marine environments;
- Prepare integrated management plans and programmes for aquatic environmental "hot spots", based on assessment results;
- Implement integrated plans, programmes and legal frameworks for surface and groundwater management through the exchange of information, technical training and resource mobilization;
- Adopt precautionary, preventative and anticipatory approaches.

40. The United Nations system and all parts of civil society, including the private sector and academia, need to combine their efforts in solving freshwater problems in order to avoid tensions and conflicts. UNEP's water policy is designed to be complementary to other ongoing initiatives being undertaken by and with relevant partners, especially: the World Water Assessment Report (which is coordinated by UNESCO); the World Water Forum (where cooperation with the World Water Council is essential for the preparations for the third Global World Water Forum to be held in Japan in 2003); and the Global Water Conference to be held in Germany in early 2002 (as part of the preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development).

41. A key component of the water strategy is the implementation of GIWA, which is the framework for UNEP's global water assessment strategy and develops a comprehensive assessment to identify priorities for remedial and mitigatory action in international waters. Adopting a holistic approach and addressing the political, economic, social and environmental factors that affect water resources, GIWA is concentrating on five priority areas: freshwater shortages, pollution, habitat and community modification, unsustainable exploitation of fisheries and their living resources, and global change. In order to undertake the assessment, GIWA is coordinating nine regional task teams and 66 subregional water science teams from around the globe, utilizing UNEP's network of over 200 regional and national environmental information consortia, under the UNEP-INFOTERRA network, GEO and GRID. In November 2000, GIWA launched its Web site (www.giwa.net), which will support informative maps that allow access to data and information about the Earth's major water systems.

42. GIWA also addresses important aspects of the assessment needs of other key UNEP activities in the field of water, such as the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities and the regional seas programme. The implementation of the Global Programme of

Action has been significantly enhanced over the past year with the preparation of regional programmes of action, the establishment of a clearing house (www.gpa.unep.org) and the development of a strategic action plan on municipal wastewater in close collaboration with WHO, UNCHS (Habitat) and the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council. Furthermore, in November 2001 Governments will review achievements under the Global Programme of Action since its adoption in 1995 and set the course and direction for future activities. Regional meetings have been planned during the year in preparation for this major global review.

D. Technology transfer and industry

43. UNEP has continued to focus on raising awareness, improving the transfer of information, building capacity and partnerships, fostering technology cooperation, improving understanding of environmental impacts of trade issues, promoting integration of environmental considerations into economic policies, and catalysing global chemical safety activities in the field of technology.

44. The ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development will be addressing the sectoral theme of atmosphere/energy and the economic theme of energy/transport, and UNEP plays a key role within the United Nations Ad Hoc Inter-agency Task Force on Energy, which is facilitating coordination and cooperation among United Nations entities in the context of the work of the ninth session of the Commission and the Ad Hoc Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Energy and Sustainable Development. There is an urgent need for more concerted action with regard to this complex and multifaceted aspect of sustainable development.

45. In an effort to bring about a global shift to energy systems that are less disruptive to the environment, UNEP's industry and environment programme promotes information exchange on cleaner production, energy-efficient technologies and renewable energy technologies through publications and an expanding network of information sources. It also builds capabilities of government and industry decisionmakers to respond to transport, energy and environment issues and facilitates advisory services to financial institutions on energy investments. UNEP creating a pioneering network of technical advice centres, which will also be able to act as brokers, helping to bring together governments, communities, development banks, other ban agencies and technical experts, to overcome financial and other hurdles which can slow down the introduction of renewable energy projects. UNEP also recognizes the need for reform of energy subsidies and sustainable development, conducting a series of regional workshops on the subject in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America, jointly with the International Energy Agency. These workshops are aimed at enhancing in-country capacities to identify sustainable energy strategies and outline policy options that can support them, including raising awareness with regard to the linkages between fossil fuel subsidies and their environmental, social and economic impacts. The output of the workshops will be a compilation of ideas, policy options and recommendations, as well as a synthesis of the main recommendations of all workshops, which will be prepared and submitted to the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

46. In October 2000, in Montreal, UNEP organized the sixth International High-level Seminar on Cleaner Production, which was attended by over 230 representatives from 72 countries, from the public and private sectors, and from civil society. The meeting reviewed and evaluated the status of cleaner production strategies worldwide, assessed achievements and remaining gaps, and worked to establish a global framework for action encouraging synergy amongst the various stakeholders of cleaner production programmes.

47. The Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies at Local Level (APELL) programme has continued to contribute to increasing public awareness with regard to emergency preparedness and the prevention and reduction of environmental emergencies and their effects. Seminars and workshops have been organised and manuals on APELL in different areas have been published.

48. UNEP has also moved to strengthen its activities with regard to improving countries' understanding of the linkages and complementarities between environment, trade and development issues. In this regard

UNEP is focusing on four integrated and complementary activities: first, research in the environment-trade domain, and practical approaches to integrating policies in this field to achieve sustainable development; second, capacity-building to develop mutually supportive environment and trade policies, including through the joint UNEP-UNCTAD task force; third, consensus-building through awareness-raising, consultations and dialogue to seek out areas of shared perception and approach among major stakeholders; and fourth, building partnerships to promote synergies and complementarities with other organizations working in the trade and environment domain.

49. UNEP has also been developing the environment components of the Secretary-General's Global Compact, building on its long-standing relationship with the private sector. We have focused on the precautionary approach, undertaking initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility, and encouraged the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.

E. Support to Africa

50. A key objective identified in the Millennium Declaration is "meeting the special needs of Africa", and the need to take special measures to address the challenges of poverty eradication and sustainable development in the continent. This priority echoes fully the Special Initiative on Africa that was launched earlier by the Secretary-General.

51. UNEP and UNCHS (Habitat) are the only organizations in the United Nations system to be headquartered in Africa. UNEP is proud of this fact and is fully convinced that this location is an outstanding asset for the organization. UNEP is working to further develop and strengthen the Nairobi headquarters with the aim of making this location the global centre for international and global environmental policy. The concentration on close cooperation with governments and civil society in Africa, to identify and solve the environmental challenges of the continent within a successful sustainable development strategy to overcome poverty, remains a central concern for UNEP.

52. In pursuance of Governing Council decision 20/27, UNEP has continued to provide support to African countries in the formulation of environmental policies and policy instruments. This has included support to regional and subregional cooperation frameworks as well as support to governments through legal and technical advisory services and technical assistance in various programme areas.

53. In promoting resource mobilization to enhance the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification in the subregions covered by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the Southern African Development Community, UNEP provided support for the organization of a subregional workshop for resource mobilization, which was held in Mombasa, Kenya, from 2 to 4 October 2000. The workshop examined opportunities for accessing funds and also evaluated the potential for private-sector investment in environmental management of relevance to activities under the Convention.

54. Within the framework of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), UNEP has provided support for the organization of consultations among African Governments, African regional and subregional organizations and non-governmental organizations operating in the region, on the various multilateral environmental agreements. For example, special expert consultations on forests were held in Nairobi from 25 to 27 January 2000 in preparation for the fourth session of the United Nations Intergovernmental Forum on Forests, which ensured stronger common African positions on issues of concern to the region.

55. UNEP provided support for the organization of the tenth bureau meeting of AMCEN (Cairo, 16 and 17 January 2000) as well as the eighth session of AMCEN held in Abuja, Nigeria, from 3 to 6 April 2000. Reflecting the resolve of African Governments to strengthen these important regional cooperation mechanisms, the Conference agreed on a new policy and institutional change, as well as a medium-term programme, in order to significantly enhance the role of AMCEN and turn it into a more effective mechanism.

56. UNEP further provided support for the organization of the first meeting of the AMCEN Inter-sessional Committee, held in Malmö on 31 May 2000, as well as the first meeting of the AMCEN Inter-agency Technical Committee, held in Nairobi in July 2000. Both meetings were aimed at mapping out measures for the effective implementation of the Abuja Declaration and the medium-term programme adopted at the eighth session.

57. A special session of AMCEN was held in October 2000 in Dakar, Senegal, to discuss key issues of concern to Africa which were on the agendas of the meetings of the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (13-24 November 2000), the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (11-14 December 2000) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (11-22 December 2000), as well as Africa's preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002.

58. With support from the United Nations Foundation, UNEP has also initiated a programme to help establish small, private-sector energy companies in Africa that are based on renewable energy technologies. The African Rural Energy Enterprise Development Initiative (AREED) brings together various financial institutions and non-governmental organizations to promote successful approaches to business start-ups.

59. UNEP, in cooperation with the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (through its activity on Land-Ocean Interactions in the Coastal Zone) and the Pan-African START (Global Change System for Analysis, Research and Training) secretariat (PASS), contributed to the organization of a workshop in Nairobi from 25 to 27 July 2000, as part of the organization's effort to promote sustainable management and human health aspects of river and coastal areas in Africa.

60. Furthermore, within the cooperative framework between UNEP, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the Governments of the Netherlands and Norway and the Carl Duisberg Gesellschaft, UNEP provided support for the organization of the first Cleaner Production Round table for Africa, and a Workshop on Sustainable Consumption, which were held in Nairobi from 9 to 11 August 2000. A regional coordination committee consisting of representatives from the five African subregions has been constituted in order to establish the round table as an ongoing mechanism. A cleaner production financing project supported by the Government of Norway is being implemented in the United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe. UNEP/UNIDO Cleaner Production Centres have been established in Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique, Tunisia, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

61. The process of revitalization of the Regional Office for Africa is almost complete. UNEP is also implementing a joint project being undertaken with UNCHS (Habitat) on "Managing Water for African Cities", which addresses the issue of water conservation and demand management, as well as protection of resources from the effects of urbanization.

IV. FUTURE PERSPECTIVES – EMERGING ISSUES

62. An underlying concern in the debate over globalization is that environmental and social issues do not receive sufficient attention, yet the impact of globalization reaches far beyond purely financial and economic matters. By incorporating such dimensions as the environment, health, cultural diversity, social justice and governance, the debate takes on a very different framework, one much more in keeping with equitable and balanced development. This definition responds to the challenge of the Millennium Declaration, as bringing the benefits of globalization to all would involve addressing all these perspectives in an integrated manner.

63. As was underscored at the informal ministerial meeting held in Bergen, Norway in September 2000, the links between environment and human health and security (secure access to natural resources for the poor, security in terms of health, and climate change) should receive increased attention, including in the context of preparations for the 10-year review of the outcome of the Rio Conference. An integrated approach to the issue is required in the United Nations system, in order to take an anticipatory approach rather than reacting to issues on a fragmented basis, for the linkages between health and the environment are

complex and multifaceted. Many of these linkages are explored, in the context of poverty, in one of the background papers (UNEP/GC.21/5) at this session. These issues include polluted air and water, poor sanitation, and insect-transmitted diseases such as malaria. Other aspects include food safety, including the issues of biotechnology and the use of genetically modified organisms; the international transmission of communicable diseases; the health impacts of global environmental change, including climate change; and the effects of hazardous wastes and chemicals. Advances have been made in creating a web of safeguards to protect human health, including through further development of environmental standards and regulations, as well as international environmental law, but much more remains to be done.

64. Another issue that requires far more urgent attention by the international community, and which should feature prominently in the discussions at the 10-year review of the outcome of the Rio Conference, is energy. Accelerating the introduction of renewable and sustainable energy, such as solar, wind and wave power, is one of the most pressing issues facing the international community. Renewable energy must be put at the heart of sustainable development if the threats of climate change and the need to tackle poverty and ill health in the developing world are to be truly addressed.

65. From the environmental perspective, there is a need to lessen dependence on carbon-intensive fossil fuels and to move towards low-carbon and zero-carbon energy supplies and a much higher degree of energy efficiency. An array of low-energy-intensive and renewable energy technologies must be developed to become the mainstream approach for the next century if tangible progress is to be made to mitigate the effects of climate change. However, it is also essential to recall that increasing human needs for energy underlie several other environmental problems, including indoor and outdoor air pollution and its health effects, damage to ecosystems from dams and deforestation, marine oil spills, and the disposal of nuclear waste.

66. A growing concern, well articulated in the Malmö Ministerial Declaration, was that the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development would need to “review the requirements for a greatly strengthened institutional structure for international environmental governance based on an assessment of future needs for an institutional architecture that has the capacity to effectively address wide-ranging environmental threats in a globalizing world”. Many initiatives, in particular the one put forward by the European Union, are being discussed with regard to global environmental governance. The majority of views expressed on reform in governance tend to support an incremental approach to strengthening and streamlining the current governance structure, with the starting point being the strengthening of the authority and mandate of UNEP to play effectively the role of the global environmental authority. Global environmental governance will also feature prominently on the agenda of this Global Ministerial Environment Forum. It is appropriate that this discussion should start at the Forum to launch a process that would culminate at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 in specific agreements on how to strengthen and streamline international environmental governance structures.

67. The international community will be looking to the Global Ministerial Environment Forum to take the lead, not to propose change for the sake of change, but to take forward the process of reform and strengthening initiated by the Secretary-General and as encapsulated in General Assembly resolution 53/242. Further to the reforms already in place, some of the areas proposed for further strengthening include: building on progress made within the Environmental Management Group to examine the need to establish a “United Nations Environment Group”, parallel to the United Nations Development Group that effectively binds the development organizations of the United Nations in a coordinated framework; the development of mechanisms for monitoring compliance with and enforcement of international law; and better methods to ensure the integration of environmental considerations in economic and sustainable development decision-making, as well as in the decisions of all relevant actors. The overall objective should be to eliminate duplication and overlap, maximize programmatic synergies, develop policy coherence among environmental agreements and establish a coherent counterpart for WTO to ensure that trade and environment are mutually supportive in the future.

V. FINANCIAL MATTERS

68. With the increasing number of international instruments concerned with the environment, it is important to underscore that the financial resources available to support international and national actions for environment and sustainable development continue to fall far short of what is required. As the Nairobi Declaration stated, in order to operationalize its mandate, UNEP needs “adequate, stable and predictable financial resources”. This has been reiterated by the international community in a series of General Assembly resolutions and Governing Council decisions. The volume of resources available to the Environment Fund has fluctuated widely in the period since the Rio Conference. It is anticipated that the 2000-2001 work programme, authorized at US\$ 120 million for the biennium, may not secure full funding. While this has occurred at a time of intense competition for resources for environment-related activities, with the development of several major international environment treaties and their associated financial mechanisms, it contradicts the commitments that Governments have made to increase the financial base of UNEP. This situation puts further pressure on a secretariat already stretched to fulfil existing mandates with severely limited financial and human resources, and is clearly not sustainable. It is increasingly clear that new mandates and responsibilities continue to be given to UNEP by member States, but that lack of funds will prevent their meaningful implementation in the long term. It is essential that a workable solution to finance a rejuvenated UNEP should be found. The sentiments expressed in the Nairobi Declaration still remain to be realized.

69. One area of optimism is that at its recent sixteenth meeting the GEF Council adopted the biggest work programme – in terms of scope, coverage and financial value – ever submitted by UNEP since the Facility’s establishment. The work programme included six full-scale projects with the participation of 140 countries and a total value of \$119 million, including \$73 million in GEF resources. As a result of the measures taken to enhance the role of UNEP in GEF, the total work programme of UNEP, as of November 2000, comprises \$286 million in GEF funding, a 42 per cent increase since the end of 1998.

70. In the context of the broader discussion on the financing of international environmental activities, many developing countries have proposed the reform of GEF to become a financial mechanism for a broader range of international environmental actions. This possibility should be explored further in the context of any discussion on institutional change.

VI. CONCLUSION

71. Having pledged to work towards “a new UNEP for a new millennium”, it is gratifying that we have collectively achieved much over the past two and a half years. As we enter this new millennium, I believe that our efforts have presented the international community with a rejuvenated UNEP – an organization that, working through an effective integrated institutional structure based on functional rather than sectoral approaches, has a strong set of focused priorities, and a clear understanding of its future objectives and of the role that it plays within the United Nations family.

72. To further pursue the goals set out in Rio and address new and emerging challenges, the international community needs strong, focused and effective institutional arrangements to ensure coherent and integrated international environmental policy. We must go further in this direction of change and strengthening, and enhance the flexibility of institutional arrangements to be able to respond to rapidly changing environmental conditions. I believe that the revitalization and reform that UNEP has undergone has positioned the organization to fully optimize its leadership role and mandate in the field of the environment. As the process has been launched to review progress achieved in the implementation of the outcome of the Rio Conference, UNEP is therefore in a unique position to provide far-reaching and insightful contributions, helping to revitalize the political will and momentum so evident in Rio and now requiring a renewed commitment to partnership and cooperation in our endeavours to assure the future of our planet.
