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GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM

POLICY ISSUES: STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL
DECISIONS 20/25 ON FRESHWATER AND SS. VI/2 ON WATER

Note by the Executive Director

1. This progress report concerns decision 20/25 and SS.VI/2 of the Governing Council, providing information on the implementation of the two decisions and on activities carried out during the reporting period.
2. At its twentieth session, the UNEP Governing Council adopted decision 20/25, requesting, *inter alia*, the Executive Director to report to the Governing Council at its twenty-first session on progress in the implementation of that decision and on related environmental issues. This decision accords particular attention to promotion of the transfer of environmentally -sound technologies for freshwater management, to cooperation with Governments, agencies and organizations in the environmental aspects of freshwater management, to identification of local expertise and knowledge related to freshwater quality and to identification of key policy issues for freshwater management, in line with recommendations of the sixth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Nairobi Declaration.

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3. At its sixth special session, the Governing Council requested the Executive Director to take into account comments made in elaboration of a water policy and strategy and requested him to take measures to implement that strategy and to report on progress made to the Governing Council at its twenty-first session.

1. Management with collaboration with governments, agencies and organizations in the environmental aspects of freshwater

4. UNEP has contributed to regional and global cooperation on freshwater and has played a significant role in convening the second World Water Forum at The Hague in March 2000. The contributions of UNEP included:

- (a) Hosting, with UNCHS (Habitat), a ministerial-level meeting with countries participating in the joint UNEP/UNCHS (Habitat) project Managing Water for African Cities and Water for a Sustainable Urban Future;
- (b) Keynote addresses, including one on water for megacities;
- (c) Consultations with the United Nations agencies participating in the water programme of the United Nations system-wide Special Initiative on Africa;
- (d) Organization of the UNEP/United Nations Water Fair as part of the United Nations Pavilion;
- (e) A presentation by the Executive Director of UNEP at the special meeting on management of the Lake Chad Basin.

5. The ministerial declaration issued at the end of that forum endorsed the role of the United Nations system in water management and called upon the United Nations to adopt a proactive response to follow-up to the forum. In a statement, delivered on his behalf by the Executive Director of UNEP, the Secretary-General highlighted the significance of the role of the United Nations in freshwater management. Member States called for an enhanced United Nations approach. That ministerial declaration was forwarded to the Secretary-General by the heads of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Health Organization, the World Meteorological Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations University.

6. In light of rapid industrialization and population growth, UNEP is participating in the ongoing global debate on the management of groundwater, international aquifers, water and small island States, water and dams, water for megacities and water-demand management challenges. The question of public and private sector partnership continues to be a matter for debate in the water and sanitation sector worldwide.

7. In implementation of the decision adopted at the twentieth session of the Governing Council on support to Africa, UNEP has focused its efforts on the special needs of Africa in the field of freshwater. Recognizing the critical role of water in addressing these needs, UNEP supported:

- (a) Preparation of a regional component of the GEO 2000 Report, which highlights the state of the African environment related to water resources;
- (b) Preparation of a medium-term programme (2000-2004) for the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, a key component of which relates to freshwater management;
- (c) Convocation of a water resources policy conference co-sponsored by the World Bank and Kenya;
- (d) Activities and projects within the framework of the Global Environment Facility International Water portfolio.

8. Cooperation between UNEP and the other Global Environment Facility implementing agencies has been significantly strengthened. In all, 55 international waters projects are under implementation or in preparation with funding from the Global Environment Facility, as a result of requests from over 130 countries. They range from river basins, such as the Danube, Mekong, Okavango, Senegal, Volta and Upper Paraguay, to shared lake basins, such as those of lakes Malawi, Ohrid, Titicaca, Victoria and Volta. These global efforts have enhanced cooperation among the Global Environment Facility implementing agencies, such as the World Bank, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Development Programme, promoting the use of environmentally sound technology in freshwater management.

9. The following regional assessment activities on freshwater assessment have been undertaken with UNCHS (Habitat), IHP/UNESCO, Economic Commission for Africa and UNEP and Governments:

(a) Groundwater vulnerability assessment with the participation of seven West African countries and a possible extension to three East African countries. UNCHS (Habitat), IHP/United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Economic Commission for Africa are participating in this activity, which is funded by the United Nations Development Fund. A possible extension is foreseen with funding from the Global Environment Facility;

(b) Seven African cities are participating in the UNFIIP/Water for African Cities project of UNCHS (Habitat), with the collaboration of UNEP, focusing on water demand management, water pollution awareness and information;

(c) The PDF-A proposal on the integrated management of the Fouta Djallon Highlands has been funded and executed by the Global Environment Facility coordinating unit with the participation of the United Nations Environment Programme/DEWA, GM/CDD, riparian countries and other agencies;

(d) The PDF-B project proposal on integrated Volta River Basin is being executed by the Global Environment Facility coordinating unit in collaboration with DEWA and riparian countries.

10. UNEP launched a joint initiative on the environmental and socio-economic impact of large dams with the World Commission on Dams with \$2.6 million from the United Nations Foundation and contributed to the following studies:

(a) A study on the impact of large dams on ecosystems (in cooperation with IUCN);

(b) A study on dam-related issues in relation to global environmental conventions;

(c) A thematic review of specific topics relevant to dams.

The World Commission on Dams has completed its work.

11. UNEP sent fact-finding missions to:

(a) China in January 1999 to evaluate the environmental impact and the cause of the floods of the Yangtze River that occurred in 1998. Based on the recommendations of that mission, an expert working group has sought to identify measures for flood mitigation and management. At the first meeting of the working group in October 1999, the ecological causes of floods were discussed in depth and mitigation measures were recommended. In order to enhance the ability of national and local governments to address the environmental factors contributing to the floods, UNEP and the State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA) of China organized a series of technical workshops on renewable energy, wetland restoration, management and conservation and mountain ecosystems in the last quarter of 1999. UNEP, UNCHS (Habitat) and SEPA will jointly organize a vulnerability assessment in relation to flood mitigation and management in the Yangtze River Basin;

(b) Romania, Hungary and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, from 26 February to 5 March 2000, to assess the environmental impact of the spill of liquid and suspended waste containing cyanide and heavy metals from a gold mine in Romania. This mission recommended response activities, better accident prevention and preparedness and possible international assistance;

(c) India (State of Orissa) in October 1999 by the UNEP/Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Joint Environment Unit to analyse the environmental situation in the wake of a cyclone.

12. The consequences of increased global water scarcity will be felt in arid and semi-arid areas, most notably in West Asia and North Africa. Water scarcity will also become acute in the rapidly growing coastal regions and in the megacities of the developing world. Many of these cities already are, or will soon be, unable to provide safe, clean water and adequate sanitation facilities for their citizens.

13. To enhance the capacity of urban managers and decision-makers in managing water resources, UNEP organised the International Symposium on Efficient Water Use in Urban Areas: Innovative Ways of Funding Water for Cities in Japan in June 1999. Participants included 150 delegates from 45 countries, primarily managers and decision-makers in national and local governments, senior managers of aid agencies, water supply authorities, urban-planning departments, international agencies and non-governmental organizations with an interest in efficient water use.

14. UNEP is collaborating with UNCHS (Habitat) on the project Managing Water for African Cities, involving seven cities in West, East and South Africa. The project promotes efficient water use, mitigation of environmental impact, facilitation of information exchange and a public information campaign.

2. Identification and Use of Local Expertise and Knowledge Related to Freshwater

15. UNEP and members of the Committee of Permanent Representatives agreed on the terms of reference for an expert group on the exchange of information on best practices in freshwater management.

16. UNEP also played an active role in regional consultations on freshwater management. The water experts are from Governments involved in relevant UNEP activities. UNEP supports the comprehensive review by Governments of implementation of Agenda 21, which includes an evaluation of implementation of chapter 18 on freshwater.

3. Promoting the Use of Environmentally-Sound Technologies to Address Freshwater Issues

17. The UNEP International Environmental Technology Centre (IETC), located in Osaka, Japan, continues to promote the use of environmentally sound technologies to address urban and freshwater management issues. To this end, the information exchange database "Maestro" is being supplemented with a number of water management technologies. In addition, an international symposium was organized in Kobe, Japan, on efficient water use in cities, technology options for rainwater harvesting, water recycling, leakage control and water efficiency. A number of technical documents were published, for example, on the management of lakes and reservoirs, freshwater augmentation, technologies, stormwater management and wastewater treatment. Currently, a citizens programme is being developed together with non-governmental organizations and local authorities using Lake Biwa in Japan as a case study.

18. UNEP has continued to provide information on environmentally sound technology to developing countries and countries with economies in transition to address urban and freshwater problems, including water resource management, sewage and solid waste. UNEP, in cooperation with the Government of Japan, organized the International Symposium on Efficient Water Use in Cities – Innovative Ways of Funding Water for Cities, in Shiga, Japan, in June 1999, which was attended by 150 delegates from 45 countries.

19. In order to develop a mechanism to identify and promote environmentally sound technologies (ESTs) for freshwater management, especially water quality management, UNEP organized a regional consultation in the Mekong River Basin area. A list of recommended ESTs will be published as a result of the project. UNEP published two documents on this topic in 1999. The first is the publication *Planning and Management of Lakes and Reservoirs: An Integrated Approach to Eutrophication*, which gives economics, cultural and technical causes of eutrophication. Targeting local decision-makers, it provides solutions to prevent eutrophication. It was prepared with the participation of 26 experts. The second document is the publication *Waste Management in Small Island States*, which is a directory of environmentally sound technologies for the integrated management of solid, liquid and hazardous wastes for small island developing states in the Pacific Region. Similar directories will be prepared for the small island developing States in the Atlantic and Indian oceans and the Mediterranean region.

4. Identification of Key-policy Issues for Freshwater Management in Line with the Recommendation of the Sixth Session on the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Nairobi Declaration and Other Relevant Decisions

20. The UNEP Water Policy particularly in its section on major tools, discusses some major policy issues requiring inter-governmental dialogue and collaboration.

5. Implementation of the UNEP Water Policy: Components on Assessment, Global Programme of Action to Protect the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities and the Regional Seas Programme

21. In September 1999, UNEP presented GEO-2000, in London, Bonn, Abu Dhabi and Nairobi. GEO-2000 is a comprehensive policy-relevant report on the state of the global environment and is an authoritative assessment of the environmental crisis facing humanity in the new millennium. The report sets out recommendations for immediate integrated actions.

22. UNEP initiated implementation of the Global International Waters Assessment as the main assessment mechanism to analyse the root causes of current problems and to develop scenarios for the world's future water resources. Global International Waters Assessment provides information for identifying areas of global priority for intervention and addresses global and regional topics, covering the major areas of concern to the international community of freshwater shortages, pollution, habitat and community modification, unsustainable exploitation of fisheries and other marine resources and climate change.

23. UNEP embarked on a review of the Global Environment Monitoring System on water quality in order to ensure that it meets long-term needs of the coordination office of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, as well as of Global International Waters Assessment and the United Nations system-wide world water development report.

24. During the reporting period, UNEP focussed its efforts on consolidation of the implementation of the Global Programme of Action/Land Based Activities. Special attention was accorded to the:

- (a) Streamlining of administrative procedures and mobilizing financial and other resources;
- (b) Enhancing collaboration with donor countries, non-governmental organizations, convention secretariats, the private sector and United Nations agencies;
- (c) Preparatory work for the 2001 inter-governmental review of the implementation of the Global Programme of Action/Land Based Activities, convening a global programme of action expert meeting in The Hague, in April 2000, to prepare the ground for the inter-governmental review;
- (d) Leveraging the resources of the Global Environment Facility;

(e) Further implementing the Strategic Action Plan on Sewage and the Global Programme of Action Clearing House Mechanism's activities.

25. The final draft of the two assessment reports, A Sea of Troubles and Land-based Sources and Activities Affecting the Quality and Uses of the Marine, Coastal and Associated Freshwater Environment, prepared by the group of experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Pollution, were endorsed in May 2000.

26. The Global Programme of Action coordination office undertook a number of measures related to binding and non-binding agreements, Global Environment Facility activities and medium-size projects, voluntary agreements, establishing linkages with the conventions and international programmes, twinning arrangements within the context of the regional seas conventions, to strengthen implementation of Global Programme of Action/Land Based Activities through strategic partnerships.

27. In response to decision 20/19 adopted by the UNEP Governing Council, the Global Programme of action coordination office has developed a strategic action plan on sewage in cooperation with the World Health Organization, the United Nations Centre on Human Settlements (UNCHS) and the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC). A set of case studies in sewage management in coastal areas of East Asia, South Asia and Eastern Africa have been prepared. In addition, a source book on best practices in municipal wastewater management has been prepared under the clearing-house mechanism, which is supported by a number of organizations with specific responsibilities in pollutant source categories (WHO, sewage; FAO, nutrients and sediment mobilization; IMO, oil and litter; IAEA, radioactive substances; UNEP, persistent organic pollutants, physical alteration, habitat modification and heavy metals).

28. The revitalization of the regional seas programme was given attention as called for in Governing Council decisions. UNEP convened, in Monaco, in November 2000, the third global meeting of the regional seas conventions and action plans to enable Governments, United Nations agencies and convention secretariats to take stock of progress made or needed. Two key objectives of the meeting were to promote horizontal ties among the regional seas conventions and action plans and to strengthen linkages among the regional seas conventions and action plans, other global conventions, multilateral environmental agreements and global programmes on the environment.

29. The UNEP regional seas Web site was launched to promote awareness of the work being undertaken by Governments, UNEP and its partners. UNEP prepared the document Financing Regional Seas Conventions: Paying for a Regional Public Good, which examines alternative and innovative financial mechanisms to support implementation of the regional seas programme.

30. UNEP focused substantial attention on the provision of technical support to the implementation of the Abidjan Convention for West and Central Africa, the Nairobi Convention for Eastern Africa, the Cartagena Convention for the Wider Caribbean, the Programme for the North-East Pacific, the Action Programme for the North-West Pacific, the Programme for the East-Asian Seas, the Lima Convention for the South-Pacific, the Jeddah Convention for the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, the Barcelona Convention for the Mediterranean Sea, the programme for the South-Asian-SACEP and the Programme for the South-Pacific (SPREP).

31. Efforts were made to strengthen linkages with the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities and integration of priorities of the regional seas programme in the work plan of the Global International Waters Project (Global International Waters Assessment). There was progress in the promotion of horizontal cooperation and among the regional seas conventions and action plans. An agreement was signed on the occasion of the sixth special session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum in Malmö, Sweden, on the twinning arrangements between the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission and the Convention for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment in Eastern Africa (the Nairobi Convention).

32. Negotiations are under way for a similar twinning arrangement between the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR) and the Convention for Cooperation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of West and Central Africa (the Abidjan Convention). Consultations are also under way for horizontal cooperation between the Programme for the Protection of the Arctic Marine and Coastal Environment (PAME) and the Cartagena Convention for the Wider Caribbean Region.
