



**Governing Council
of the United Nations
Environment Programme**

Distr.: General
19 October 2004

English only



**Twenty-third session of the Governing Council/
Global Ministerial Environment Forum**
Nairobi, 21–25 February 2005
Items 4 and 5 of the provisional agenda*

**Assessment, monitoring and early warning:
state of the environment**

**Outcomes of intergovernmental meetings of relevance to the
Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum**

Outcome of the Global Hilltops-2-Oceans Partnership Conference

Note by the Executive Director

The Executive Director has the honour to provide, in the annex to the present note, the Cairns Communiqué arising from the Global Hilltops-2-Oceans Partnership Conference convened by UNEP and the Government of Australia in Cairns, Australia, from 11 to 14 May 2004. Participants included ministers for the environment, Government officials and representatives of industry, non-governmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, research organizations and universities from around the world. Taking into consideration recent developments, particularly in the field of water and sanitation, the major goals of the conference were to share experiences, build partnerships and identify practical steps forward for advancing the implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities through national programmes and action to protect the coastal and marine environment. The conference participants acknowledged the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the eighth special session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, and the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, and looked forward to future international forums, including the international meeting for the 10-year review of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the thirteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, the millennium development review, the Fourth World Water Forum, and the second intergovernmental review of the Global Programme of Action.

The annex is being circulated as received by the secretariat, without formal editing.

* UNEP/GC.23/1.

Annex

The Cairns Communiqué

I. Hilltops-2-Oceans (H₂O) partnership

1. As the world grapples with the massive economic, social and environmental losses associated with coastal degradation, and with the challenge of providing water supply and sanitation services to over two billion people who lack even basic services, it must never forget that river systems are highways of both life *and* death, prosperity *and* poverty. Scarce water supplies in streams, rivers, wetlands and deltas, essential to life, opportunity, and economic development, are also primary vectors for transporting pathogens, nutrients, agricultural run-off, sediments, heavy metals, persistent organic pollutants and litter over large distances from the hilltops to the oceans and beyond national boundaries. In the coastal zone these pollutants accumulate and impinge on public health, biodiversity and important economic sectors such as fisheries and tourism.

2. In this context, the H₂O: Hilltops-2-Oceans Partnership Conference reaffirmed the crucial links between watersheds, river systems, coastal estuaries and the marine environment. It also highlighted the interdependence of the respective stakeholders in these environments and the critical need to strengthen cooperation between freshwater, coastal and oceans institutions. In particular, action is needed at global, regional, national and local levels to foster collaborative partnerships between government, water resource managers, local and indigenous communities, industry, the private sector and research bodies. Such partnerships should address the integration of coastal and marine management with watershed management policies, programs and legislation. Similarly, such partnerships should seek to raise awareness, build multi-stakeholder capacity at the local level and emphasize mutual benefits.

3. In many instances voluntary multi-stakeholder partnerships provide flexible and effective complements to the implementation of legally binding instruments. Further, innovative voluntary partnerships may go beyond binding commitments. Good examples of partnership building initiatives, such as the White Water to Blue Water Initiative, can be used as a model in other regions.

4. The conference focused on National Programmes of Action (NPA)¹ and on the possible use of Wastewater Emission Targets (WET) as they refer to sanitation.

5. With regard to using NPAs as frameworks for multi-stakeholder partnerships, the key outcomes and major points of discussion included:

- Agreement that NPAs provide an effective tool and policy framework for integrated 'whole-of-government' actions to protect water resources from the Hilltops to the Oceans.
- NPAs should be long term iterative processes that contribute to poverty reduction strategies and/or national sustainable development strategies, and should be appropriately reflected in domestic priorities and budgets.
- Mobilization of domestic resources is clearly required to implement NPAs. International financing can only provide a stimulus to embed the implementation of the NPA into national structures – in this regard, the GPA Coordination Office has an important role to play as a broker of partnerships between developing countries and donors/international financial institutes.
- NPAs can provide a platform to coordinate partnerships emerging from multilateral negotiations, e.g. partnerships relating to the WSSD targets on freshwater, coastal and marine environments.
- NPAs can also provide a platform for Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) aimed at protecting and preserving water resources.
- The enhancement of the GPA Clearing House Mechanism, the use of its Marine Pollution Solutions database and the formation of a virtual network of NPA practitioners will facilitate the continued sharing of experiences, promote best practices and provide technical assistance to advance the development and implementation of NPAs.
- An indication that the 2006 H₂O target of forty countries actively involved in developing or implementing NPAs will be exceeded.

6. With regard to **WET as they relate to Sanitation**, the key outcomes and major points of discussion included:

- Launch of a partnership between UNEP and the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC), linking the WET-initiative with the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) for all campaign, WET – WASH, to ensure that the WSSD targets on Water and Sanitation include all aspects, in particular hygiene awareness and the safe discharge and re-use of wastewater.
- In the implementation of the WSSD sanitation target, all of the water cycle management and hygiene practices should be considered, from hand washing to sustainable treatment of wastewater, including its reuse.
- Considerable progress in the integration of policies for wastewater management has been achieved in several regions, including in the Pacific Islands and South Asian regions. The use of WET was highlighted as a potential vehicle to further the implementation of the GPA component on municipal wastewater at the regional level.
- Setting targets is not an end in itself but a tool to achieve specific policy objectives. Targets will differ at global, regional, national and local levels depending on specific circumstances. Flexibility is key to an adequate use of targets, setting different types of targets addressing various situations and needs. Once targets are set, progress towards them should be monitored and evaluated periodically.
- The community should be involved in the process of setting targets.

II. New partnerships

7. New partnerships emerging from the Conference, amongst others, include:

- The WET-WASH partnership – the H₂O initiative (WET component) and WSSCC WASH campaign;
- A partnership between the Ramsar Secretariat and UNEP/GPA on wetland conservation;
- A partnership between World Ocean Network and UNEP/GPA for an H₂O awareness campaign;
- A partnership between the Pacific Region and UNEP/GPA for the development of NPAs;
- A partnership between the Caribbean Region and UNEP/GPA for the development of NPAs;
- A merger of the H₂O and Freshco Partnerships, both launched at the WSSD in September 2002;
- A partnership with the Australian Water Partnership as a means of sharing H₂O experiences; and
- An expert exchange between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA, USA) and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA, Australia).

8. These partnerships are indicative of the important role of the GPA as a broker among stakeholders. These partnerships, and others, will be the basis of a dynamic H₂O Programme of Work to be implemented in preparation for the Second Inter-Governmental Review of the GPA in 2006.

9. Special thanks are given to the Australian government for hosting and contributing to the H₂O Partnership Conference and to Minister Jan Pronk for his insightful and dynamic facilitation of the discussions.

III. Session summaries

10. Key Points from the H₂O Conference Discussions included:

A. Integrating Water Resource and Coastal Area Management Through Partnershipsⁱⁱ

11. Putting partnerships for the protection of coastal and marine environments on the political agenda is not as difficult as implementing the agenda. Political stakeholders need to articulate the opportunities and benefits of H₂O type partnerships, move away from generalised non-committal statements and 'harden-up' the agenda with a focus on implementation.

12. Emphasis should be given to win/win arrangements between stakeholders and partners involved in the use and protection of both freshwater and coastal resources. Similarly it should be recognised that partnerships don't always work and it is as important to learn from these experiences as from those that are successful.

13. There is a need to create at local, national, regional and global levels, a platform for the strategic involvement of stakeholders in the protection of water resources and the integration of coastal and marine management with watershed management. Presently there is no home (at the international level) to address the sustainable development of coastal and marine environments.

14. The Freshco Partnership, also launched at the WSSD in September 2002, emphasises – through workshops, guiding principles and case studies – the links between Integrated Water Resource Management and Integrated Coastal Zone Management. With a view to maximizing expertise and resources, the Freshco Partnership will now combine with the H₂O Partnership.

15. In the field of stakeholder involvement in environmental protection, there is a general shift from purely representative democracy to a more participatory democracy. In this context, there is a need not only for horizontal coordination but for vertical coordination as well.

16. A key to adequate stakeholder participation and the formation of new partnerships is the provision of adequate information and knowledge surrounding the central issues. To ensure successful partnerships, partnership brokers should (i) ensure they focus on the central issues; (ii) include the appropriate partners; (iii) promote the exchange of knowledge and develop a language of understanding; and (iii) facilitate attitudes of patience, cooperation and mutual benefit.

17. Local people most frequently find the best solutions to local problems.

B. Using NPAs as Tools for Protecting Coastal and Marine Environmentsⁱⁱⁱ

18. NPAs provide an overarching mechanism for linking national-provincial institutions, integrating policies and programs, (environment/development/resource use/health and poverty alleviation), clarifying roles and responsibilities, aligning relevant government enterprises/resources around agreed priorities, and facilitating a Hilltops-2-Oceans approach to water management. The development of NPAs may provide an opportunity to develop or strengthen institutions, foster new partnerships, and can be an effective tool to generate political commitment beyond the environment.

19. When developing NPAs, it is necessary to identify and engage key stakeholders at national and provincial levels (e.g. government, industry, NGOs, community groups, youth, women, indigenous peoples, religious organisations) early around the issues, to set priorities and to foster partnerships. Different circumstances, institutional arrangements, infrastructure, capacity and issues will shape the development of NPAs in each country.

20. The time needed to develop and implement an NPA should not be underestimated and a staged approach based on adaptive management is highly appropriate.

21. Making the best use of domestic resources and generating industry investment are necessary to support the development and implementation of NPAs. Effectively engaging the private sector remains a challenge and a range of mechanisms may be explored based on the capacity and circumstances of countries. Mechanisms such as green labeling and encouraging public private partnerships, taxes and levies, are examples of strategies to consider.

22. Critical to the development and implementation of NPAs is a clear understanding of the issues and the setting of targets to guide actions and measure progress. Monitoring and evaluation should be an integral part of the NPA process. Reporting on progress and promoting successes helps to maintain commitment and sustain partnerships.
23. Effective strategies to raise awareness of, and maintain commitment to, a country's NPA include the use of the media, working with community leaders, focusing on practical results and addressing causes, building the technical and managerial capacity of stakeholders, using demonstration pilot projects, and fostering the sharing of experience among stakeholders.
24. Using WET as Tools for Protecting Coastal and Marine Environments^{iv}
25. Regions and/or governments should first define their objectives with respect to the protection of coastal and marine environments and the crucial linkages between sewage discharge and the provision of sanitation services as called for in the WSSD target.
26. Subsequently, regions/governments should develop policies included in NPAs to reflect these objectives. In developing these policies and NPAs, WET can be an important tool. However, their setting depends on the respective enabling conditions and contextual situation at regional or national levels. Using regional WET should support joint progress reporting on environmental aspects of water and sanitation (e.g. Joint Monitoring Programme and World Water Development Report on the WSSD target on Water and Sanitation). Setting regional WET can help to develop national policies.
27. It is important that countries consider and cater for the costs to implement their policies, weighting and choosing the WETs that reflect the most cost-effective measures and technologies.
28. A major policy option consists in the re-use, recycling and prevention of waste and wastewater at the source. In many situations wastewater can be seen as a resource.
29. There is a clear link between sanitation and the environment. For that reason, sanitation targets as adopted at WSSD should be approached in conjunction with targets on wastewater treatment. Indicators should be developed that monitor the impact of wastewater discharges on the health of both humans and ecosystems.
30. Wastewater Emission Targets can be technology-, economy-, load-, risk-, needs-based, etcetera. (e.g. addressing shortage of drinking water). Countries and/or regions should make their choice or combine them, based on their policy objectives and respective conditions.
31. The setting of such Wastewater Emission Targets should be realistic and flexible, allowing for change over time. WET should be related to sustainable development policies, to the available capacity, to social and economic development, and to resources available to meet those targets. Targets should be ambitious, and have S.M.A.R.T. characteristics.
32. Both the setting and implementation of WET require the cooperation of all stakeholders.
33. The needs of developing countries and the special case of SIDS with regard to their capacity and resources should be recognized in setting appropriate and realistic targets.
34. Achieving the WSSD targets on Water & Sanitation can only be meaningful when both WASH- and WET-relevant aspects are being addressed. People centered approaches are key for achieving progress with respect to the targets on water, sanitation and hygiene. There is a need for accurate indicators at the household level.

C. Engendering Political Support for National Action, Partnerships and Integrated Solutions^v

35. A common understanding of the H₂O problem by politicians and other stakeholders, based on available information (economic and environmental), is critical to generating political support. The credibility of the information rather than its extent is a key issue. Focussed messages based on credible information must be accessible to all parties to foster a common language for public debate and to engender the effective articulation of solutions.
36. Political pressure can be brought to bear from key stakeholders acting in partnership. In this regard, understanding the political process and specific players involved in decision making is critical to effectively target actions. Further, developing alliances between stakeholders with common interests (e.g. NGOs and scientists, industry and regional bodies, industry and science) will strengthen the ability

to engender political support/action. Stakeholders should remember that economic implications and an understanding of who benefits and who does not are key drivers of political debate.

37. The ability to harness the media is critical to maintaining visibility but also to ensuring that the debate remains well informed.

D. Underlying Importance of Civil Society's Involvement^{vi}

38. Non-governmental stakeholder engagement is fundamental to ensuring the H₂O planning process successfully transfers to an implementation process.

39. Civil society engagement is about acknowledging the diversity of interests, expectations and capacity of stakeholders to participate, as well as providing appropriate fora for meaningful discussion of the issues and proposed solutions. Targeted approaches and good information are critical to support effective engagement of civil society, acknowledging that information may be from various sources including science and local knowledge.

40. It is important to note that not all stakeholders have a mandate to participate, while on the other hand, for some of the very relevant stakeholders, the protection of the natural environment is low on their hierarchy of needs. Planners and managers need to identify their target audience and disseminate information accordingly.

41. The involvement of civil society can help close gaps in information across an entire watershed – from the Hilltops to the Oceans – and between sectors. It can also aid in generating and implementing locally appropriate solutions.

E. Role of the Private Sector in H₂O Partnerships^{vii}

42. Private sector involvement in partnerships is not simply about finance or ownership of assets. There is also a need to develop human capital among all partners. Capacity building through partnership is a two-way street.

43. The private sector is solution focused, but is necessarily led by the sustainable development mandate of respective countries. Governments need to provide an enabling environment to support private investment in water and coastal protection. Regulation that gives private sector involvement a mandate and clarifies risk management is critical to long term partnerships. Clear standards or compliance rules provide certainty and benchmarks for the private sector.

44. Markets, especially in terms of water supply and sanitation, need regulation to ensure the equitable provision of services and the protection of the public good (*vis-à-vis* both the environment and health).

45. Governments need to provide a Hilltops-2-Oceans, or source to sea, framework for private sector participation in the water sector. The management issues of any particular watershed should be determined through multi-stakeholder dialogue and partnerships between public and private sectors and should be aligned with local values and needs.

46. PPPs concentrating only on finance limit opportunities for such partnerships. Other important contributions of the private sector to water-focused partnerships include experience and expertise, management capacity and technology.

47. The new model of PPP includes, amongst other things, shared risk management, combined human and financial resources, and viewing the consumer – not the partnering government agency – as the customer.

48. Government legislation can be used as a tool to facilitate innovation by the private sector. However, government regulations often lag behind the private sector's capacity for environmental protection and new technology or innovated management practices can lead to improved regulation. In this sense, the public and private sectors are partners in continuous improvement.

F. Institutional Frameworks for National Action, Partnerships and Integrated Solutions^{viii}

49. While there are common drivers and issues across and between global regions, institutional responses to the problems of marine pollution are primarily a function of the circumstances of

individual countries. Some Hilltops-2-Oceans type arrangements may be formal and permanent, while others may be temporary and focused on a specific issue or activity. Some are government based, while others are private sector or community-based.

50. Hilltops-2-Oceans type management frameworks linking regional, national, provincial and local institutions will be facilitated by focussing on real problems – as opposed to hypothetical problems or wish lists of possible action – and integrated ‘on-the-ground’ solutions.

51. Fragmentation of legislative instruments across levels of government and the broad range of land based sources of coastal and marine pollution are key challenges to address in a Hilltops-2-Oceans approach. Mandated mechanisms for coordinating government processes are critical to effective institutional arrangements.

52. Steering the attitudes of managers at all levels of government through information-partnerships will facilitate effective and efficient institutional frameworks. In this context, publicly tracking progress and requiring accountability for both public and private actions and investments in the field of water and watershed management is an effective mechanism for communicating outcomes widely.

G. Raising H₂O Awareness: Strategies for Outreach^{ix}

53. Initiatives aimed at raising awareness of H₂O type issues should be demand driven and tailored to respective target audiences. Different outcomes, e.g. normative language in multilateral agreements or on-the-ground skills demand different strategies for raising awareness and are dependent on the baseline of awareness, resources available and the availability of existing networks to disseminate knowledge and information.

54. H₂O awareness raising initiatives / networks should be linked where possible and should make use of local knowledge, respective skills and levels of expertise. Networks should facilitate the exchange of credible and relevant information.

55. Campaigns such as that launched by World Ocean Network, which will focus on the H₂O theme for the next two years and include a common interpretive display, an oceans passport, field actions and celebration of World Oceans Day, provide an excellent opportunity to reach large numbers of people and educate them on the issues of land-based sources of marine pollution.

56. Indicators of H₂O awareness is not limited to mere numbers, but more importantly, to changes in behaviour among the general public, the private sector and public authorities.

57. Awareness raising, in terms of marketing campaigns, should be thought of as a science and based on solid market research. Careful preparation of both the message and the messenger will influence the effectiveness of campaign. Established scientists, politicians, statesman and spiritual leaders are examples of good messengers. In this regard, the messenger and the media, if carefully managed, can be used as a tool to shape the public agenda, which in turn shapes the policy agenda.

58. To raise awareness of H₂O issues or partnerships at local, national or global levels, responsibilities must be clearly assigned with a view to generating ownership of new activities and partnerships. Emphasis should be given to solutions provided by partners, not only the problems.

H. Building H₂O Capacity through Training, Sharing Information and Technology Transfer^x

59. Capacity building must be aimed at improving stewardship and it is therefore not appropriate to speak of capacity building as a separate task. In fact, everything H₂O stakeholders do leads to either an improved or reduced capacity to manage the river basin and coastal environment in which the stakeholder has an interest.

60. Awareness raising initiatives should build capacity, which in turn should lead to integrated and collaborative approaches to problem solving. In adopting a Hilltops-2-Oceans approach, managers should pursue a ‘learning by doing’ approach.

61. Presently there is a substantial body of knowledge and tools concerning the management of partnerships, however transferring this knowledge to key stakeholders through formal training mechanisms can be a difficult task. Critical to training stakeholders in this regard is the development of trust between the trainer and the trainee.

62. Capacity building, sharing information and transferring technology should be a cooperative two-way street. Partners should focus on their respective specialties/strengths and look for innovative ways to share their skills while adding new skills. Local capacity should be utilised and acknowledged where appropriate.
63. Training programmes should be adapted to reflect local interests, needs and culture. Important issues to consider, amongst others, in designing Hilltops-2-Oceans training programmes include (i) the permanency of trained personnel; (ii) the capacity of trained personnel to communicate and work effectively with other stakeholders in the river basin (other stakeholders may be large distances away, in different jurisdictions or speak a different language); the availability of human, intellectual and financial resources; and (iv) the presence or absence of communication channels between scientists and decision makers.
64. Capacity building initiatives should be matched with opportunities to apply new skills.

ⁱ National Programmes of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (NPAs) represent national implementation of the 1995 Global Programme of Action (see: www.gpa.unep.org.)

ⁱⁱ Panelists: P. Bridgewater, Ramsar Convention Secretariat; C. Creighton, Australian Water Partnership; F. Dodds, Stakeholder Forum, UK; M. Dhyr-Nielsen, UNEP Collaborating Centre on Water and Environment; S.A. Ross, Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia.

ⁱⁱⁱ Panelists: Z. Al-Agwan, Yemen; C. Corbin, Saint Lucia; M. Gauthier, Canada; K. Geirsson, Iceland; A. Lum Kong, Trinidad and Tobago; N. Mijangos Lopea, Guatemala; C. Panditharatne, Sri Lanka; T. Ramikie, Jamaica.

^{iv} Panelists: G. Bott-Parsons, Brinkerhoff Australia Pty Ltd; C. Corbin; E. Gorre-Dale, WSSCC; J. Francis, WIOMSM/ROA/Tanzania; L. Gray, GBRMPA; C. van de Guchte, UNEP GPA Coordination Office; A. Ivanov, IOI Operational Centre Volga, Russia; C. Pratt, SOPAC Secretariat; K. Rose, Department of Environment and Heritage (DEH), Australia; W. Schlosser, Water and Sanitation Extension Programme, Pakistan; T. Slatyer, DEH; J. Worm, AIDEnvironment.

^v Panelists: S. Morris, CSIRO; A. Skeat, GBRMPA; T. Wrigley, CANEGROWERS; I. Zethoven, WWF-Australia.

^{vi} Panelists: B. Gwynne, Foundation for Development Cooperation, Australia; C. Rodgers; T. Middleton, Stakeholder Forum, UK.

^{vii} Panelists: M. Hube, AUSTRADE; P. Maphoshe-Ugmeni, Water South Africa; R. Naylor, Veolia Water Australia; I. Smith, Conservation Volunteers Australia.

^{viii} Panelists: G. Bruce, Townsville City Council, Australia; C. Lewsey, NOAA, US; J.K. Patterson Edward, Suganthi Devadason Marine Research Institute, India; D. Tarte, Healthy Waterways, Australia; K. Vodden, Simon Fraser University, Canada; H. Yorkston, GBRMPA.

^{ix} Panelists: T. Allen, Marine and Coastal Community Network, Australia; T. Middleton, Stakeholder Forum, UK; K. Rose, DEH; P. Vallette, World Ocean Network/NAUSICAA, France.

^x Panelists: P. Bridgewater, Ramsar Convention Secretariat; C. Moreas Ferreira, Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center, Costa Rica; K. Shurcliff, Nature Conservancy-Australia; S. Vergara, World Fish Center-Philippines.