



United Nations Environment Programme



Distr.
GENERAL
UNEP/GC.7/5
20 December 1978
Original: ENGLISH

GOVERNING COUNCIL
Seventh session
Nairobi, 18 April - 4 May 1979
Item 6 (a) of the provisional agenda

REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON CO-ORDINATION TO THE GOVERNING COUNCIL OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME AT ITS SEVENTH SESSION

Introduction

1. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 32/197, ACC reported to the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session in 1978 that the merger of the Environment Co-ordination Board with ACC had been effected and that ACC would assume the Board's functions, as set out in General Assembly resolutions 2997 (XXVII) and 32/172. Accordingly, ACC would report annually to the Governing Council of UNEP and an appropriate preparatory process for the discharge of these functions would be required, for which the Executive Director of UNEP would assume responsibility, in consultation, as necessary, with other interested Executive Heads.
2. Having been informed of the above ACC decision, the Governing Council of UNEP welcomed the assumption by ACC of the Board's functions and urged the Executive Director to ensure inter alia, that the preparatory process involved appropriate consultations with designated officials of the members of the United Nations system. That Governing Council decision was among those particularly welcomed by the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session in 1978.
3. In assuming responsibility for the preparatory process and, in particular, for the preparation of the ACC report which is to be submitted to the UNEP Governing Council at its seventh session, the Executive Director convened a meeting of officials who were designated by their Executive Heads to deal with environmental matters and which was held at Rome from 27 to 29 September 1978 at the kind invitation of FAO.

SECTION I

A. Thematic joint programming and medium-term planning

4. At its seventh session, the Environment Co-ordination Board agreed that joint programming meetings should formulate and agree on action programmes regarding the activities to be carried out by all the organizations concerned over a four-year period. At the sixth session of the Governing Council, the Executive Director proposed the development of a system-wide medium-term environment programme which would start in 1984 and be based on thematic joint programming. The necessary methodology would be further developed during an experimental period continuing until 1982. The Governing Council endorsed those proposals, which it considered to be in line with the recommendations contained in General Assembly resolution 32/197, and noted the Executive Director's intention to consult with other executive heads. The Executive Director is to report further to the Governing Council at its seventh session (April 1979). At its second regular session, 1978, the Economic and Social Council considered the report of the Governing Council and in particular welcomed the Governing Council's decision, as did the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC), which found that the "move to a system-wide medium-term environment programme based on thematic joint programming and in harmony with over-all system-wide co-ordination efforts is a development to be encouraged".

5. Noting the decision of the Governing Council and the views of the Economic and Social Council and CPC on that system-wide effort, ACC expressed its willingness to extend full co-operation in that endeavour and in the development of the requisite methodologies during the experimental phase. The work on the harmonization of programme budgets and medium-term plans now being carried out under the auspices of ACC is particularly relevant. The experience of previous thematic joint programming exercises has shown that the utility of thematic joint programming would be greatly increased by the use of an agreed framework, which should provide a basis for the move to the medium-term programme. Such a framework would be prepared taking account of CPC's views on programming and evaluation, used on an experimental basis and further developed on the basis of experience and in harmony with overall system-wide efforts. In the further development of the framework, account should be taken of the fact that what is of primary importance in the achievement of programme objectives is governmental action at the national level, and that thematic joint programming should be developed in such a way as to maximize the impact of the United Nations system in the context of these national efforts.

6. ACC noted that joint programming had been carried out with ECWA in Beirut from 4 to 6 April 1978, thus concluding the first round of bilateral joint programming with regional commissions. A brief account of that programming is presented in annex I to the present report. Thematic joint programming on the follow-up to the Intergovernmental Conference on Environmental Education took place in Paris from 21 to 23 June 1978. A summary report is also attached as annex II.

7. With regard to the thematic joint programming held in October 1978 on natural disasters, environmentally-sound and appropriate technologies and industry and environment, it was agreed that summaries could also be annexed to the present report after they had been cleared by the designated officials for environmental matters at their meeting to be held from 11 to 16 December 1978 at Nairobi.

8. ACC decided that, of the subjects selected by the Governing Council for in-depth consideration at its eighth session, priority should be given for thematic joint programming in 1979 to:

Marine pollution;

Marine living resources;

Genetic resources;

Wildlife and protected areas.

ACC also noted that, following a decision on the improvement of the working environment taken by the Governing Council at its fifth session, an inter-agency consultative meeting held at ILO Headquarters in March 1978 had laid the foundations for thematic joint programming. A second meeting is scheduled for November 1978. At its sixth session, the Governing Council took a further decision on this matter. It was agreed that thematic joint programming on the working environment would take place in 1979.

9. ACC noted that the working group on Earthwatch and its sub-groups on research and evaluation, GEMS, IRS and IRPTC were functioning smoothly and that they assisted the Executive Director in harmonizing the activities of the United Nations system in the Earthwatch programme.

10. ACC agreed that its members would work closely with the Executive Director in formulating precise definitions of "goals for 1982". Its members would also co-operate in activities for the achievement of such goals.

B. Environmental impact of development activities

11. ACC wished to draw the attention of the Governing Council to the following information on the status of the three studies undertaken at the request of the Environment Co-ordination Board.

12. When it reviewed the subject of Health Aspects of Water Development Programmes, the Board had found it useful to have two policy statements prepared, one to be addressed to national governments, the other to United Nations organizations and other international bodies. ACC noted with approval the decision of the designated officials for environmental matters to refer these draft policy statements to the ACC sub-committee on

water resources development for consideration on the basis of their present scope. The sub-committee may wish to consider further work on the basis of a broader scope. The sub-committee will review the two drafts at its November 1978 meeting and its views will be communicated to the designated officials at their December 1978 meeting. The statements, revised as necessary, could be submitted by the Executive Director to the seventh session of the Governing Council, which may decide on their further dissemination.

13. The study of the Impact of the Industrialization Process on Environmental Health is proceeding and it is hoped that it can be completed in early 1979. The designated officials will review the study and undertake the preparation of policy statements, as in the case of the health aspects of water development programmes.

14. ACC took note with satisfaction of the study The environmental Impact of the activities of the United Nations system prepared by the Board consultant. A summary of the study, including recommendations, is to be found in an annex to this report. One recommendation which ACC wished to encourage was that all the organizations concerned should accelerate the formulation of guidelines on assessing and on minimizing the possible adverse environmental impacts of development activities. The guidelines are intended for use by international organizations, international funding organizations and national authorities. With the assistance of UNEP and in consultation with the organizations concerned, guidelines will be formulated initially on the following subjects:

Effects of pesticides on industrial crops;

Irrigation in arid and semi-arid areas;

Watershed development;

Pulp and paper industry;

Hides and skins industry;

Coastal tourism.

15. ACC also considered that some of the other recommendations made in the study were generally acceptable. It invited organizations to take action as appropriate and was of the opinion that the recommendations might also be discussed at a meeting which the Governing Council invited the Executive Director to consider convening in 1979 to review the outcome of that and similar studies "with the purpose of encouraging bilateral, multilateral and international development assistance agencies to make wider and more systematic use of methodologies to introduce environmental considerations into their development policies, programmes and projects at the earliest possible stage and to the fullest possible extent" (decision 6/6 A, para. 9). ACC also decided that maximum assistance should be given to developing countries in improving their environmental legislation and infrastructure.

C. Incorporation of environmental considerations in the new international development strategy

16. By its resolution 32/168, the General Assembly stressed the need for ensuring that environmental considerations are taken into account, inter alia, in the formulation of the new international development strategy. At its sixth session, the Governing Council requested the Executive Director to take the requisite steps to that end, collaborate with the other organizations concerned within the United Nations system and with the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation and keep the Governing Council informed at each session of the results of his endeavours.

17. ACC recognized that environmental considerations were an integral part of the sectoral responsibilities of its members, who would therefore be expected to include those considerations in the contributions which they made to the preparatory process for the special session of the General Assembly in 1980, both through the support they provided to their own intergovernmental forums and through the effort which ACC was making through the Task Force on Long-Term Development Objectives. ACC noted the Governing Council's concern that sustainability should be a criterion of any new development strategy and agreed to keep the Executive Director informed of the relevant steps taken in accordance with the Governing Council's request that he report annually on the matter.

SECTION II

A. Co-ordination and follow-up of the implementation of the plan of action to combat desertification

18. In paragraph 8 of its resolution 32/172 on the United Nations Conference on Desertification, the General Assembly decided to entrust the Environment Co-ordination Board, among others, with the responsibility of following up and co-ordinating the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, in accordance with recommendation 27 thereof.

19. In accordance with resolution 32/197 on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system, ACC, at its special session at Geneva on 20 May 1978, decided to assume the functions of the Environment Co-ordination Board, including that of reporting annually to the Governing Council of UNEP. The Governing Council of UNEP noted that development with satisfaction (decision 6/1, section II, para. 6). The Economic and Social Council also welcomed that development at its second regular session held in 1978.

20. The Governing Council also took note with satisfaction of the report of the Environment Co-ordination Board on its eighth session and of the positive action taken by the Board and its members for the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification and invited the governing bodies of the members of the Board to include arrangements in their respective programmes and budgets for the implementation of the Plan of Action.

21. That invitation of the Governing Council had been or would be communicated to the governing bodies of the members of the Board. It was, however, noted that, in many cases, the calendar of programme budgeting of those bodies would not permit measures derived from the Plan of Action to be included in 1980-1981 biennial budgets. In other cases, the organizations concerned had already taken the recommendations of the Plan of Action into consideration in the preparation of their regular budgets. Extra-budgetary resources might also be utilized in the coming years for implementation of the Plan.

22. At its eighth session, the Environment Co-ordination Board stated that the Working Group on Desertification "is expected to be a main Instrument of co-operation and co-ordination of its members' activities in the implementation of the Plan of Action. The Working Group would provide the forum for integration of its member organizations' inputs to specific projects, including field operational activities, use thematic joint programming as appropriate and organize the reporting by the Board to the Governing Council on the implementation of the Plan of Action... The membership of the Group will be open to all members of the Board, but the United Nations organizations mainly involved in the implementation of the Plan of Action will naturally constitute its core".

23. The first meeting of the Working Group, held at Rome from 25 to 26 September 1978, considered matters relating to the establishment, functions and working methods of the Group, its programme of work, as well as an outline of the phased plan for implementation of the short-term and long-term objectives of the Plan of Action within the United Nations system. After further elaboration by the members, that operational plan will be submitted to the next meeting of the Group for approval.

24. In accordance with paragraph 8 of General Assembly resolution 32/172 and with the decisions of the eighth session of the Environment Co-ordination Board, the Group, at its first session, considered that it should perform the following functions:

(a) Provide the forum for integration of organizations' inputs to specific anti-desertification projects, including field operational activities, in close co-operation and co-ordination with the activities of the Consultative Group for Desertification Control;

(b) Work out a phased plan for implementation of short-term and long-term objectives, review its implementation regularly and revise it as and when required on the basis of the progress achieved (this plan will be drawn up to cover geographical (national, regional and global activities) and subject areas); and ensure that thematic joint programming in the field of desertification is carried out in a manner appropriate to the matter under consideration and in accordance with general guidelines to be provided for such exercises.

(c) Regularly review the implementation of the Plan of Action by the individual organizations and bodies of the United Nations system and by the system as a whole with a view to recommending readjustments of on-going activities as and when required;

(d) Identify and formulate projects for co-operative action in the implementation of the recommendations of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification;

(e) Prepare for consideration by the designated officials for environmental matters, who will submit it to the Executive Director of UNEP, a draft of the annual report which he will propose to the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination for submission to the Governing Council of UNEP on the status of implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification.

(f) Assist the regional commissions in implementing paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 32/172, which requests the regional commissions to undertake follow-up actions to implement the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification.

25. The Group further agreed to consider the phased plan for implementation of short-term and long-term objectives at its second meeting in January 1979 with a view to identifying existing gaps in ongoing and planned activities and finding ways and means of closing such gaps.

ANNEX I

ECWA/UNEP Joint programming, Beirut4-6 April 1978

The initial review of topics of mutual concern which took place at Beirut in November 1977 provided a useful basis for the joint programming meeting held from 4 to 6 April 1978. On the basis of ECWA's medium-term plan and the objectives and strategies for UNEP's subject areas and functional tasks, the joint programming meeting identified the following areas of common interest for co-operation: arid and semi-arid lands including follow-up of the United Nations Conference on Desertification; soil and water; human settlements, human settlements technology; science and technology; energy; environment and development; and regional seas (the Mediterranean, Red Sea and the follow-up of the Kuwait Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Areas). The meeting agreed on a draft memorandum of understanding which was signed by the Executive Secretary of ECWA and the Executive Director of UNEP on 7 April and 24 April 1978, respectively.

ANNEX II

1. Thematic joint programming on the follow-up to the Inter-governmental Conference on Environmental Education
(Paris, 21-23 June 1978)

1. As agreed at the seventh session of the Environment Co-ordination Board, UNEP organized a thematic joint programming exercise on the follow-up to the Intergovernmental Conference on Environmental Education. UNESCO and UNEP jointly prepared some background documentation for the meeting in close co-operation with interested organizations of the United Nations system.
2. The meeting, which was held in Paris at the kind invitation of UNESCO, was chaired by the UNEP Assistant Executive Director for Programme and attended by representatives of ESCAP, UNDP, UNFPA, ILO, FAO, UNESCO, WHO, WMO and IMCO.
3. A working paper, prepared by UNESCO in consultation with UNEP, provided the framework for the discussions. The paper, presented in tabular form, was divided into three chapters:
 - (I) The Tbilisi framework for the development of environmental education;
 - (II) Environmental education and training activities of United Nations agencies and programmes;
 - (III) Possible co-operative action by United Nations agencies and programmes.

The general public, specific occupational or social groups and certain professionals and scientists were the target populations considered.

4. The participants reviewed agencies' ongoing activities in environmental education and training, and planned activities based on the following five objectives:
 - (i) Integration of environmental education in co-operative United Nations programmes, projects and activities;
 - (ii) Exchange of information and experience in environmental education and training;
 - (iii) Development of educational programmes and materials for environmental education and training;

- (iv) Inclusion of an environmental dimension in the pre-and in-service training of education personnel;
- (v) Promotion of research, experimentation and evaluation in environmental education.

5. It was agreed that the organizations concerned would provide more information in writing to UNEP on ongoing and planned activities to enable it to prepare a document which would constitute the first step in the formulation of a system-wide programme for environmental education and training.

6. It was recognized that the holding of a thematic joint programming meeting was useful only if it was considered as an important step in a continuous process which would involve further bilateral and inter-agency discussions aimed at the co-ordination of ongoing activities and the joint programming of new ones.

II. Thematic joint programming on natural disasters - Geneva, 23 October 1978

1. In accordance with the decision taken by ECB, at its eighth session, on 4 April 1978, UNEP organized a thematic joint programming exercise on natural disasters, which was held in Geneva on 23 October 1978. The meeting, which was chaired by the Assistant Executive Director for Programme of UNEP, was attended by representatives of ECE, UNDR0, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNHCR, ILO, WHO, WMO and UNEP.

2. The Chairman recalled in his introductory statement that ECB had requested that the exercise should develop an agreed action programme in the area of natural disasters, and should further delineate the initiatives to be taken by all organizations concerned over the next four years. The exercise was closely linked to the in-depth review of the area, and would contribute to the establishment of a United Nations system-wide environment programme, scheduled to start in 1984.

3. A background paper prepared by the UNEP secretariat for the meeting, which provided a proposed joint programme, a workplan and proposed objectives and strategies in this subject area, was discussed in detail, commented on in general terms and amended.

4. The meeting agreed in particular to recommend the revision of goal 15 to read: "Application of proven methods and techniques for the optimum operation of early warning systems for phenomena which may cause natural disasters". Participants also revised the text dealing with objectives and strategies for natural disasters. It was further agreed that interested organizations would provide UNEP with an assessment of current needs in a revised short list of highest priority items. These, together with other proposed changes provided in writing by agencies, would be incorporated into the programme document to be submitted to the Governing Council at its seventh session or into the supporting information document as appropriate.

III. Thematic joint programming on environmentally sound and appropriate technology, Geneva, 24-25 October 1978

1. The first consultations on environmentally sound and appropriate technology were held in Geneva on 24 and 25 October 1978. The meeting, which was chaired by the Assistant Executive Director for Programme of UNEP, was attended by representatives of ECE, UNCTAD, UNDP, ILO, FAO, WHO, WMO and UNEP.

2. The Chairman recalled in his introductory statement that these consultations were aimed at identifying gaps in knowledge and the exchange for further joint supportive action. The implementation of goals, approved objectives and strategies, particularly in areas selected for thematic joint programming, will facilitate in these areas the process of introducing the United Nations system-wide medium-term planning linked to evaluation of programmes and projects.

3. The background on this subject area, which is described in detail in UNEP programme documents, in Governing Council decisions and in reports of past activities, was reviewed and the useful role of UNEP in formulating principles and guidelines for the transfer and generation of environmentally sound and appropriate technology was recognized.

4. Participants were invited to focus attention on the following issues:

The place of technology in their respective programmes;

Tangible accomplishments since the sixth session of the Governing Council;

Adequacy of objectives and strategies;

Activities of their organizations in the implementation and achievement of the relevant goals for 1982.

5. Participants prepared a revised text consisting of one objective and several strategies for environmentally sound and appropriate technology and agreed to provide UNEP with material on recent substantive accomplishments, their workplan and budgetary data in the format provided by the UNEP secretariat.

IV. Thematic joint programming on industry and environment - Geneva, 26 October 1978

1. The first consultations on industry and environment were held in Geneva on 26 October 1978. The meeting, which was chaired by the Assistant Executive Director for Programme of UNEP, was attended by representatives of ECE, UNCTAD, UNIDO, UNDP, ILO, WHO, IAEA and UNEP.

2. The Chairman recalled the objectives of the consultations, which he believed would also provide an opportunity to examine the role of different agencies in relation to industry and environment. A preliminary draft of material for the programme and information documents to be submitted to the seventh session of the Governing Council of UNEP was reviewed, and a number of agencies provided additional information on their activities, in particular regarding their recent significant accomplishments.

3. Participants agreed to accept a broad definition of industry within the context of the revised objectives and strategies which they had recommended for incorporation in the preliminary draft of the programme document. The broad definition would include not only primary manufacturing and resource-exploiting activities, but also both commercial activities and utilization of resulting products.

4. A number of participants observed that they had difficulties in providing estimates of budgetary implications for specific agreed objectives, although most agencies had already taken steps to comply with the United Nations General Assembly decision to establish a system-wide medium-term programme plan as of 1984.

ANNEX III

Environmental Impact of activities of
the United Nations system

Summary

The report was prepared by a consultant, Mr. O.M. Ashford, in accordance with a decision taken at the seventh session of the Environment Co-ordination Board that a study should be made of major impacts on the environment resulting from operational field projects and of relevant norms, standards and regulations. The study should include proposals for in-depth analyses of selected projects and for the formulation of guidelines on assessing and minimizing the possible adverse environmental impact of development projects.

In the main section of the report, the relevant activities of members of the United Nations system are grouped under the following headings: agriculture, energy, fisheries, forestry, health, human settlements, industry, mineral extraction, river basin development, rural development, tourism, transport, weather modification, environment and development and environmental management. For each of these categories of activity, examples are given of projects with major environmental impacts, both beneficial and adverse.

This is followed by a brief section dealing with a tentative categorization of the environmental impacts of operational field projects.

An account is then given of the steps which have been or are to be taken to identify and minimize possible adverse environmental impacts of operational field projects. This section of the report begins with separate consideration of the steps taken by UNDP and the World Bank and continues with an overall review of the other organizations concerned. Some suggestions are made regarding further action which could usefully be taken in this area.

The next section of the report discusses the norms, standards and regulations of the ILO, FAO, WHO, ICAO, IMCO and IAEA, the only United Nations bodies which have adopted such material on environmental topics.

The report concludes with proposals for the further work which is required on in-depth analyses and the formulation of guidelines.

The consultant's main conclusions and suggestions may be summarized as follows:

UNDP: In many UNDP projects, environmental factors are very carefully considered, but there is always a risk of something serious being overlooked. To reduce this risk, the UNDP Policies and Procedures Manual should include a requirement that each project document should contain a clearly identifiable section on possible environmental impacts. Furthermore, the respective responsibilities of Regional Bureaux, resident representatives and UNEP for considering the environmental aspects of UNDP projects should be examined and clarified as necessary. There should be a separate section on environmental aspects in all UNDP project completion reports (p. 24).

Adequate guidance should be given to resident representatives on the environmental impacts of development projects (p. 25).

World Bank: The World Bank appears to be the only organization in which a systematic centralized effort is made to minimize possible adverse environmental impacts of operational field projects (p. 26).

Operational staff should receive further environmental training. The staff of the Office for Environment and Health Affairs should be strengthened (p. 26).

More should be done to increase the environmental expertise available in developing countries, for example, through training courses given in the Economic Development Institute (p. 26).

There is a need for a short, non-technical publication for senior Government officials about the need to take environmental factors into account in development projects. The World Bank might take the initiative for preparing such a publication, together with UNEP and other United Nations organizations (p. 27).

Projects which could have major adverse environmental impacts should be systematically subjected to "post-audits" five or ten years after completion (p. 27).

General: Unlike the World Bank and UNDP, where clearly defined policies and directives have been laid down, the other United Nations organizations deal with the environmental aspects of their operational field projects in a more ad hoc manner. A great deal of attention is nevertheless given to such questions (pp. 22 and 28).

Each United Nations organization should have a publicly declared policy on the environmental aspects of development projects. Clear directives on this subject should be given to all staff concerned with the formulation and implementation of such projects. A complete set of the relevant resolutions and decisions of governing bodies should be assembled and published, possibly in a future edition of the UNEP "Compendium of Legislative Authority" (p. 29).

Guidance material on environment and development should be made readily available to all Headquarters staff and to experts recruited to carry out field projects. Full use should be made of the World Bank publication on "Environmental, Health and Human Ecologic Considerations in Economic Development Projects". Other United Nations organizations should co-operate with the World Bank in revising this publication. ACC should endorse the best available environmental guidance material prepared by United Nations organizations (p. 29).

Maximum assistance should be given to developing countries in drafting new environmental legislation, improving existing legislation and ensuring an adequate national infrastructure for enforcing such legislation (p. 29).

More "visibility" should be given to the work already being successfully carried out by United Nations organizations to minimize adverse environmental impacts of development projects (p. 30).

Second part of the study

The preparation of guidelines on assessing and minimizing possible adverse environmental impacts of development projects should be given higher priority than the preparation of in-depth analyses of individual projects (p. 34).

There should be two kinds of guidelines - those of a general nature and those dealing with specific sectors. The general guidelines should include a section on institutional aspects, indicating the types of machinery needed in international organizations for assessing and minimizing adverse environmental impacts. For the general guidelines, consideration should be given to introducing a priority system for the various types of action to be taken to minimize adverse environmental impacts. The highest priority should be given to impacts which ought to be considered in all development projects in all countries (p. 34).

Sectoral guidelines should be prepared through inter-agency co-operation, with UNEP taking the first step (p. 35).

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