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## INTRODUCTORY REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### I. OVERVIEW

1. During the past year, world attention was focused in particular on the critical economic and social crisis in Africa, which, coupled with the severest drought in the history of the region, brought about starvation and human suffering on an unprecedented scale. The world was especially shocked to see the wasted landscape in the Sahel and millions of people in Ethiopia threatened with starvation. Equal shock was provoked by tragic industrial accidents such as the leakage of toxic gas at Bhopal and the explosion of stored liquefied gas at Mexico City, where many hundreds of people perished. These environmental tragedies served to remind the peoples of the world that environment is not just pretty trees and flowers but a matter of survival.

2. The most important lesson we have yet to get across is that famine and industrial catastrophes are but a symptom of a deeper malaise. Droughts and accidents are facts of life - but in both instances the effects need not have been nearly so severe.

#### A. The African crisis

3. In Africa the drought need not have led inevitably to famine if the region's natural resources had been properly managed. It is when ecosystems that support life on Earth are strained to the limit, and when over-population and prevailing economic circumstances force unsustainable economic practices on the poor to meet their basic needs, that people become most vulnerable to so-called "natural disasters". Overcropping, overgrazing, deforestation and general soil degradation destroy the resource base and cause the arable land to succumb to the encroaching desert. In any case, the problem of drought itself must be seen as a recurrent long-term problem which must be tackled not just on an emergency footing, but through a long-term approach which will ensure that it is fully taken into account in the future development plans of the countries affected.

4. At this juncture, the Executive Director wishes to recall his statements to the Second Committee of the General Assembly in 1983 and 1984. In 1983 he warned that the drought in Africa was threatening to bring starvation and suffering on an unprecedented scale - a warning which unfortunately turned into a tragic reality. In 1984 he stated that, as the international community responded with food and other immediate relief, "we should not deceive ourselves that this will provide a lasting solution - it can help heal the wound, but cannot stop another being inflicted".

5. The Executive Director, of course, firmly joins the call from the entire United Nations system for the provision of emergency assistance and the adoption of all possible measures to stop the famine and save the millions of lives at stake. The Executive Director has already indicated his intention to co-operate fully with the United Nations Office for Emergency Operations in Africa established by the Secretary-General.

6. The generous response of so many countries shows that a basic chord of humanity and solidarity has been struck, and the basic unity of all mankind invoked. Yet the roots of the crisis lie in recurrent drought which must be anticipated, and environmental degradation which must be stopped and reversed, by changing the economic and social conditions - both internal and external - which help bring it about.

7. There can be no recovery worthy of the name unless nations and people everywhere take steps to conserve their croplands, grasslands, forests, watershed systems and fisheries. The major and urgent challenge is to devise measures which will meet immediate emergency needs as well as begin to deal with some of the critical medium-term problems.

8. Given the critical conditions in Africa and the impact of desertification on the continent, it surely is a grave paradox that, while continued stress is placed on the importance of arresting desertification, the response of both developed and developing countries in concrete terms remains totally inadequate.

9. For example, considerable importance is attached to desertification control in the Third Lomé Convention between the States of the European Economic Community and their partners in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP States), which was signed on 8 December 1984. In article 38 the ACP States and the Community recognized "that the physical, economic and political existence of certain ACP States is threatened by endemic drought and growing desertification, which destroy all efforts at development". They agreed that "control of drought and desertification constitutes a pressing and imperative need for the success of any development undertaking", and that "the same will apply to the States bordering the affected areas".

10. Yet the priority accorded to desertification control activities by those seriously affected by it, and the mobilization of resources through the Consultative Group for Desertification Control for the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, have been totally inadequate. The Consultative Group has approved measures to improve its functioning and create

greater donor involvement in the selection and framing of projects and in information exchange, in the expectation that such greater involvement would lead to increased financial support. Project proposals were sent to potential donors in early September 1984. As of 1 March 1985, reactions had been received from only two donor countries (the Netherlands and Switzerland), indicating that some of the project proposals were undergoing a technical appraisal, the results of which would be made known at or before the next meeting of the Consultative Group, scheduled for July 1985. This situation does not augur well for the meeting.

#### B. Chemical accidents

11. What applies to the African drought applies equally to chemical catastrophes. If dangerous chemicals are to be produced and transported without taking the necessary precautions then, without a doubt, disasters will strike more often and take an increasing toll in human life and suffering. Catastrophes like those of Flixborough (in the United Kingdom) and Seveso (in Italy) highlighted the dangers of poor planning in industrial development, yet we soon forget these tragedies and never seem to learn from them: it always seems to require a disaster to reawaken the world to environmental mismanagement. The root causes of all these and other environmental problems must be corrected through international co-operation if the world is to avoid similar disasters in future, and UNEP has committed itself to continue to work relentlessly on those causes, in close collaboration with policy makers, industrialists, agriculturalists, development specialists, population experts and others.

#### C. Environmental management, peace and stability

12. UNEP has consistently warned that environmental degradation, overuse and misuse of scarce resources, environmental refugees and even simple unplanned rural-urban migration, deepening poverty and the mounting demands placed on shared water resources are posing threats to national stability and to regional and global peace. We see signs that the message is getting through. It is our hope that action should not be too little or too late, and therefore we intend to give greater attention to such issues, with a view to mitigating these flashpoints for human conflict, by setting specific targets to achieve concrete results in these important areas.

#### D. Positive signs

13. The task of tackling the whole range of environmental problems is a formidable one. However, despite its very meagre resources UNEP has continued to make a significant contribution to international efforts to deal with the rising tide of environmental destruction.

14. Some progress is being made in pursuit of the mandate of UNEP "to engender a better understanding of the central role of environmental issues in the broader economic and social context". <sup>1/</sup> For instance, 1984 saw the industrialized countries beginning to address the African economic and social

crisis, as well as take concrete steps to mitigate the immediate suffering in Ethiopia and other countries with critical food shortages, thus giving them a chance to rehabilitate their natural resources. At the same time, countries in eastern and western Europe began to work together in tackling the sulphur dioxide emission problem. These activities seem to indicate that the message of UNEP is perhaps beginning to get through to the decision makers.

#### E. The year of outreach

15. One of the major achievements of UNEP in 1984 was the successful implementation of its strategy of "environmental outreach", designed to take the environment into the mainstream of international issues. In order to promote this process, UNEP devoted much of its energy in 1984 to broadening and deepening the dialogue beyond the established "environment constituency". Thus, the World Industry Conference on Environmental Management, the Inter-Parliamentary Conference on Environment and the Global Meeting on Environment and Development for non-governmental organizations have been co-sponsored by UNEP in various capitals during the last few months.

##### 1. The World Industry Conference on Environmental Management

16. The World Industry Conference on Environmental Management was convened at Versailles, France from 14 to 16 November 1984. This Conference, which was sponsored jointly by world industry and UNEP, in co-operation with the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), brought together 514 representatives from 71 nations. These included government ministers, chief executives of industry, parliamentarians, and high-level representatives of labour, the scientific community and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

17. The conference addressed itself to three major issues:

- (a) Industry experience with environmental problem-solving;
- (b) Environmental management opportunities and constraints;
- (c) More effective environmental management.

18. The Conference adopted a number of major recommendations for future actions, which are contained in an addendum to this report (UNEP/GC.13/3/Add.4). The positions taken by major industries on environmental management and the economic consequences of unbridled degradation were very constructive. A new understanding appeared to have evolved in industry of the costs of runaway exploitation of the Earth's resource base. The importance of and need for preventive and anticipatory policies, rather than corrective measures, were also clearly recognized and accepted. It was agreed that the goal of sustainable development, particularly industrial development, needs to be pursued in order to improve standards of living as well as the quality of life. Furthermore, the Conference agreed that commitments to environmental management should be made

at the highest level of government and industry. There was also full agreement that the era of confrontation over the environment was over and that the spirit of co-operation between industry, Governments, parliamentarians, labour and the general public, as manifested at the Conference, must be maintained and carried forward at the local, national and regional levels. UNEP and industry have thus laid down solid groundwork for enhanced future co-operation.

19. As far as follow-up was concerned, the Conference requested the Executive Director of UNEP to initiate discussions between a geographically balanced group of high-level governmental representatives and a small group of chief executive officers convened by ICC, as well as with other organizations, where deemed necessary. The overall objective would be consultation over the effective implementation of mutually agreed environmental programmes and discussion of proposals for action; the process would not exclude other groups from communication with UNEP or Governments on environmental issues. The Executive Director is in the process of establishing a regionally balanced group of a dozen government representatives at the highest possible level, while ICC has established a Group of Industry Chief Executives. It is expected that the first joint meeting of the two groups will take place in November 1985. The Executive Director considers that concrete co-operative actions in such fields as training, information and provision of expertise should be initiated before the November meeting as examples of what could be done. Efforts are being made by UNEP to assist in or catalyse the convening of national meetings with similar representation to that at the Conference to foster a substantive dialogue at the national level. The Kenya Chamber of Commerce has taken the first initiative by organizing a national meeting in May 1985. Another large developing country and a major developed country are seriously considering similar initiatives.

## 2. The Inter-Parliamentary Conference on Environment

20. Another aspect of advancing the policy of environmental outreach in 1984 was the convening, jointly with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, of an Inter-Parliamentary Conference on Environment, which took place in Nairobi from 26 November to 1 December 1984. The Conference was attended by 98 members of 44 national parliaments, observers from international organizations and government representatives.

21. The conference adopted a number of conclusions and recommendations which stressed the need for concerted action at the national and international levels to halt degradation of the environment and mismanagement of natural resources, if the doubling of the world population in the next half-century is to be accompanied by improvements in the quality of life. Poverty was recognized to be the greatest polluter in the developing countries.

22. The Conference requested the Executive Director to bring the conclusions and recommendations adopted at the Conference to the attention of the Governing Council. In compliance with that request, they are contained in an addendum to this report (UNEP/GC.13/3/Add.4).

23. As follow-up to the Conference, IPU has distributed its conclusions and recommendations to all participating national parliamentary groups and to appropriate international organizations. Several parliamentary groups have reported that the recommendations have been taken up in their national assemblies. The Council of Europe has also submitted them to its Committee for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. The IPU Council endorsed the conclusions and recommendations at a meeting at Lomé in March 1985. As a further part of the follow-up to the Conference, IPU in co-operation with UNEP plans to convene a meeting of 25 national groups in 1986 to survey progress made in implementing the recommendations.

3. The Global Meeting on Environment and Development  
for non-governmental organizations

24. The Global Meeting on Environment and Development, the first of its kind, was organized by the Environment Liaison Centre (ELC), with financial and substantive assistance from UNEP. It was an outcome of the commitment of UNEP to an outreach strategy, to establish contacts with development and other NGO groups.

25. The Global Meeting, which was held at Nairobi from 4 to 8 February 1985, was attended by 140 participants representing 109 non-governmental organizations from 48 countries, as well as 83 guests and observers from embassies and high commissions, United Nations agencies and other international organizations. Issues dealt with in depth included rural economy, urban economy, Northern development and North-South relations.

26. The participants reviewed the co-ordination of their efforts and resources, and decided to:

(a) Develop and implement advisory services for non-governmental organizations on techniques and functions of networking, with special attention to reinforcement of the administrative capacities of grass-roots organizations;

(b) Support and join the Seeds Action Network;

(c) Intensify their efforts and develop their strategies in the Pesticide Action Network.

27. They also decided to establish a "No more Bhopals" network which would produce documentation, conduct research and take action on such issues as potentially hazardous chemicals, energy, afforestation and desertification.

28. The Global Meeting established a basis for a common strategy among different groups of non-governmental organizations to work towards bringing about sustainable development. It called upon UNEP to support the further development of the strategy and its extension to include many other non-governmental organizations around the world. The participants felt that the creation of a wider, more effective network of non-governmental organizations working with UNEP would lead to increased inputs and more regular feedback from them and stronger support from them for the environment programme.

29. The Global Meeting adopted 119 recommendations, details of which are being issued separately (UNEP/GC.13/3/Add.4). They are all of a very constructive nature, covering a wide spectrum of fields. Some of those which are of direct relevance to UNEP programmes concern the following areas:

(a) A Seeds Action Plan. This made reference to genetic resources, and called for environmental impact studies on diversity when any new agricultural projects are introduced;

(b) Afforestation and desertification. A call was made for land use reforms and improved land tenure systems to promote afforestation, and for the incorporation of environmental concerns in development plans for marginal areas. In research and development programmes, special attention was urged for arid and semi-arid woodlands and savannahs for sustainable use by pastoralists;

(c) Effects of militarization on the environment and the development process;

(d) Charges in assistance policies - including a call for a shift from project approaches to programme approaches;

(e) A campaign to reform aid policy and practice in favour of rigorous environmental appraisal procedures, the involvement of target groups and the promotion of development aid which builds a sustainable rural and urban economy;

(f) The development and implementation of advisory services on techniques and functions of networking, building North-South and South-South networks in relation to environment and development.

#### F. Some other major achievements

##### 1. Urban air quality

30. In 1984 the Global Environmental Monitoring System (GEMS) released an analysis of data gathered by the GEMS urban air quality monitoring network during the years 1973 to 1980. The analysis showed that, in general, there was no deterioration in urban air quality during the period despite rapid growth in many cities, although several of them do exceed the WHO recommended health limits. It is clear that air pollution is no longer the prerogative of the developed world (see also the Annual Report of the Executive Director (UNEP/GC.13/2), chap. IV, para. 112).

##### 2. The ozone layer convention

31. The Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Protection of the Ozone Layer, convened under UNEP auspices in Vienna from 18 to 22 March 1985, reached final agreement on a new global framework convention, to be known as the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer. The Convention, which was opened for signature on 22 March 1985 and will enter into force after

ratification by 20 States, represents the result of three years of preparatory negotiations and drafting work by a UNEP group of legal and technical experts. Its purpose is to prevent depletion of the atmospheric ozone layer, Earth's protective shield against ultraviolet radiation and a vital component of our climatic system.

#### G. New initiatives

##### 1. The Global Resource Information Data Base

32. The Global Resource Information Data Base (GRID), part of GEMS, has been designed as a data management service for the United Nations system. It will enable environmental data to be transformed into information useful to decision makers. GRID will integrate data on the basis of geographical location, a most effective common denominator in environmental planning and management. The two-year pilot phase of GRID has been made possible by donations from the Governments of Switzerland and the United States and a private company. Hardware, software and seconded staff will come from the United States. The Canton of Geneva has offered accommodation rent-free in the University of Geneva to house the GRID processor facility. The Swiss Government has agreed to provide fellowships and bursaries to facilitate the use of GRID by developing countries. Negotiations with other potential supporters, including the Governments of Canada and Norway, are under way. GRID will be controlled from a facility at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi.

##### 2. Water management in the Zambezi basin

33. UNEP, in co-operation with other members of the United Nations system, is launching a new comprehensive programme on Environmentally Sound Management of Inland Water. Within this programme, high priority is being given to Africa, suffering as it is from recurring drought; initial efforts are being directed towards proper co-operative environmental management of the common river system of the Zambezi by the riparian States. Experts from the eight basin countries, and representatives from various United Nations organizations, have been invited to an expert group meeting in April 1985 to prepare a diagnostic study on the present state of ecology and management of the river system and also a draft action plan.

#### II. MAJOR UNITED NATIONS EVENTS IN 1985

34. As part of its outreach policy, UNEP will this year participate actively in two important events: International Youth Year and the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women.

##### A. International Youth Year

35. At its thirty-fourth session in 1979, the General Assembly designated 1985 as International Youth Year with the motto "participation, development, peace". The Year is intended to offer a useful and significant opportunity for drawing attention to the situation, needs and aspirations of youth.

36. Given the fact that many environmental issues transcend the interests of particular generations, UNEP has a specific responsibility for the welfare of young people, and seeks to involve them in meeting environmental concerns. Accordingly, the Executive Director will give special emphasis during 1985 to

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disseminating information showing how environmental concerns and the efforts of UNEP are relevant to youth, and seeking to enhance their contribution and commitment to the environment. As part of this effort, he is considering the development of a "Young people's environmental agenda" based on the views of young people themselves. With a view to associating youth with specific environmental activities and projects, the Executive Director is also considering the feasibility of developing an "environmental volunteers" activity, with the co-operation of the United Nations Volunteers Programme. Progress in these areas will be reported to the Governing Council at the time of the thirteenth session.

**B. World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women**

37. At its thirty-fifth session in 1980, the General Assembly decided to convene in 1985, at the conclusion of the United Nations Decade for Women, a World Conference to review and appraise its achievements. The Conference is scheduled to take place in Nairobi, at the invitation of the Government of Kenya, from 15 to 25 July 1985, and will have as its theme "equality, development and peace".

38. The contribution of UNEP to the Conference will take into account the views expressed by the Governing Council at its thirteenth session on the nature of the role women should play in the protection of the environment. The main burden of the environmental crisis in most developing countries falls on women. They are collectors of firewood and drawers of water. Women can therefore play a vital role in stimulating environmental protection. The Executive Director will be addressing the Conference on that role.

39. A special social evening, with a film or films and some brief statements, will be organised for a cross-section of the delegations to the Conference on 19 July. A group of conveners for the evening, composed of eminent women from various parts of the world and some women staff members of UNEP, is being established.

40. In order to highlight the importance they attach to the roles of women and youth in the protection of the environment and the proper management of natural resources, Governments are invited to give serious consideration to including representatives of women and youth in their delegations to the thirteenth session of the Governing Council, and to include in their statements to the Council their views on the roles of these two important social groups.

**C. Observance of the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations**

41. At its thirty-ninth session, the General Assembly decided that the theme of the fortieth anniversary would be "United Nations for a better world", and expressed the hope and desire that the year 1985 would mark the beginning of an era of durable and global peace and justice, social and economic development and progress and independence of all peoples. It invited the organizations of the United Nations system to participate actively in the observance of the fortieth anniversary, and to formulate such plans and

programmes as were appropriate for the occasion. A programme of activities spread over the year is accordingly being developed, and all organizations of the United Nations system are giving consideration to the manner in which they will participate in the commemoration. Emphasis is to be placed on objectively presenting the achievements of the United Nations and the role it can play in the years ahead.

42. The decision of the United Nations to address environmental concerns, the holding of the Stockholm Conference, and the subsequent establishment and continued efforts of UNEP, represent a positive achievement for the United Nations and a contribution to improving the future for all humankind. The spirit of harmony between nations which has prevailed in the Governing Council of UNEP, and which continues to broaden and deepen their commitment to the environmental cause nationally and globally, demonstrates the achievement of the United Nations in the environment field. Accordingly, it is fitting that UNEP should participate actively in the commemoration. A suitable brief commemorative meeting following the opening meeting of the Governing Council session would appear appropriate, as would a message from the Governing Council to be transmitted to the commemorative session of the General Assembly which is to be held for a short period culminating on 24 October 1985, United Nations Day. Such a message, which could be prepared by permanent representatives to UNEP in consultation with the Executive Director, and adopted at the Governing Council's own brief commemorative meeting, could also be included in a suitable short publication presenting the achievements of the United Nations in the environment field and its commitment to the preservation and enhancement of the environment for future generations.

### III. REGIONAL INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETINGS ON ENVIRONMENT

#### A. The African environmental conference

43. The Governing Council, by its decision 11/7, part eight, invited the Governments of the African region to convene, in co-operation with regional organizations and institutions, an African environmental conference to discuss national environmental priorities and identify common problems. It requested the Executive Director to provide secretarial services for the Conference.

44. UNEP communicated the above decision to all African Governments, the Organization of African Unity and the Economic Commission for Africa, and requested interested Governments to inform UNEP of their willingness to host the conference. Five countries initially expressed interest in hosting the conference, but subsequently all withdrew. However, recently another Government expressed its interest in hosting the conference, and UNEP has provided it with all relevant information.

45. The Conference is scheduled to be held from 3 to 5 October 1985, it is to be preceded by a two-or-three-day preparatory expert meeting.

46. After full consultations with relevant members of the United Nations system and experts from a representative number of African countries, the Executive Director intends to submit a proposed programme of action to the conference. This programme of action will be prepared within the overall

framework of the Lagos Plan of Action, in the light of the results of the meetings of the African subregional environmental groups held over the past two years, and in particular their joint meeting in Lusaka in April 1984.

47. Given the urgency of dealing with the root causes of the African crisis, the Executive Director is seeking the approval of the Governing Council for UNEP to host the conference and meet the related costs, should no host Government be found for the proposed dates. If a Government is able to host the conference, UNEP will still need to meet the costs of the expert meeting, and to provide secretarial assistance and other services.

#### B. Asia and the Pacific

48. Information on intergovernmental meetings held in Asia and the Pacific may be found in the Annual Report of the Executive Director (UNEP/GC.13/2, chap. III, paras. 18-21). UNEP was represented at a ministerial conference on the environment organized by ESCAP in Bangkok on 11 and 12 February 1985. The conference adopted a declaration and a framework for action plans for the management of the Asian environment. The second meeting of the Governing Council of the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme is to be held at Dhaka on 17 and 18 April 1985. The fourth meeting of the Co-ordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia is to meet at Manila in April 1985. UNEP intends to continue to assist and co-operate with regional seas activities in both these areas.

#### C. Latin America and the Caribbean

49. The fourth Intergovernmental Regional Meeting on the Environment in Latin America and the Caribbean is to be held in Mexico at the end of April 1985. UNEP as usual is providing secretariat support for the meeting, which will be attended at the beginning and end by the UNEP Assistant Executive Director, Office of the Environment Fund and Administration, and the Executive Director respectively, as it will discuss a major report prepared by the Executive Director on the use of national currencies and contributions in kind for the implementation of regional programmes of common interest. The report is also to be presented to the Governing Council (UNEP/GC.13/3/Add.5).

#### D. Europe

50. The thirteenth session of the Senior Advisers to ECE Governments on Environmental Problems was held in Geneva between 5 and 8 March 1985. The Senior Advisers reviewed recent activities and approved a work programme for the period 1985-1989. Special attention was paid to the implementation of the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution and the Declaration on Low- and Non-waste Technology and Reutilization and Recycling of Wastes. Work is under way on a declaration on the protection of flora, fauna and their habitats in the European region, and a regional strategy for protection of the environment and the rational use of natural resources to the year 2000 and beyond, which is closely related to work on the Environmental Perspective.

#### IV. CROSS-ORGANIZATIONAL PROGRAMME ANALYSIS: ENVIRONMENT AS THE PROPOSED TOPIC FOR 1987

51. In 1977, the Economic and Social Council, acting on a recommendation of the joint meetings of the Committee on Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) and the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC), decided to discontinue its review of the reports of the specialized agencies and instituted instead a system of cross-organizational programme analysis. It invited ACC to propose annually to CPC sectors for in-depth system-wide review.

52. In 1980, CPC decided that a two-year lead time was needed for the preparation of such analyses. Accordingly, CPC will have to decide in April or May 1985 on the subject it is to consider in 1987.

53. In 1984, the ACC Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Programme Matters) felt that environment would be the most appropriate and timely subject for 1987, as preparations for the system-wide medium-term environment programme for 1990-1995 would then be well under way, as would work on an Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond. It was suggested that the cross-organizational programme analysis for 1987 should focus on co-operation and co-ordination aspects of environment, and that the Designated Officials for Environmental Matters should be involved in its preparation.

54. Should CPC decide upon environment as the topic for 1987, past practice suggests that it will most probably require a preliminary report to be submitted to its 1986 session, setting out the conceptual approach which is intended to be used in the preparation of the study.

55. In 1984, CPC confirmed its earlier recommendation that the cross-organizational programme analysis should be reviewed, whenever possible, by the competent substantive intergovernmental body. There will be no session of the Governing Council in 1986, and its session in 1987 will in all probability overlap with the CPC session expected to be considering the subject.

56. This makes it particularly important that the views of the Council should be taken into account at the conceptual design stage, and should be reflected in the presentation to CPC in 1986. Accordingly, should CPC indeed decide upon environment as the topic for 1987, the Executive Director intends to present, together with the relevant secretariat units at Headquarters, a preliminary paper on the subject as an addendum to the present report.

57. UNEP is also involved in a current cross-organizational programme analysis exercise on economic and social research and policy analysis, which is to be considered by CPC in 1986. Among important UNEP activities of relevance to the current analysis are the state-of-the-environment reports, and research into the concepts which form the basis of the relationship between environment and development. These include ecodevelopment, alternative patterns of development and life-styles, the interrelationships between people, resources, environment and development; the integration of environmental considerations into development planning; the concept of sustainable development; and the methodologies and tools being developed in the areas of cost-benefit analysis, environmental impact assessment and environmental accounting.

## V. STATUS REPORTS

### A. Reform of the information programme

58. Reform of the information programme has been the subject of discussions and consultations at various meetings between the permanent representatives to UNEP and the Executive Director, his Deputy and the Chief of the Information Service.

59. Some details of the progress made in this sphere are supplied in the Annual Report. The salient features are:

(a) A proposed action programme for the reform of the Information Service was prepared and circulated in July and August 1984 to senior officers of UNEP and to permanent representatives to UNEP for comments,

(b) Target audiences were identified and their relationship and relevance to UNEP defined; appropriate objectives for the information programme were set out for each target audience,

(c) The staff and financial resources available for the information programme were reviewed, and on the basis of this review an appropriate organizational structure for the Service was drawn up,

(d) An information programme for the 1985 calendar year was defined to begin to meet the requirements of Council decision 12/15,

(e) The information needs of developing countries were analysed, as were the opportunities for use of non-traditional media in those countries,

(f) A substantial effort was made to streamline the publications programme: a small editorial committee has been formed, and a new publications policy has been adopted,

(g) UNEP News has been issued as a bi-monthly newsletter in accordance with the requirements of the Governing Council,

(h) Many technical publications containing reports on projects and proceedings of special conferences are now produced within UNEP,

(i) The first journalistic attachment programme is to be initiated during the thirteenth session of the Council,

(j) The resources released by the discontinuation of financial support for Mazingira are being directed to the development of regional information activities in the light of the priority needs identified.

### B. The Clearing-house

60. Experience gained during 1984 with resource mobilization demonstrated that the clearing-house could play its brokerage role more efficiently and more convincingly when projects presented to aid donors had been prepared jointly by requesting Governments, or institutions, and UNEP, and when individual projects could be related to a national or sectoral plan approved

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by the country, or to an international or regional action plan. The special contribution made by the Government of Sweden enabled the clearing-house to review important environmental problems in Botswana, Indonesia, Jordan and Peru. The results of the reviews - approved by the Governments concerned - were brought to the attention of a number of aid institutions. In Botswana, for example, four projects identified by the clearing-house have been approved for funding by foreign aid agencies; another three projects are already under way; and consultations proceeding with EEC are expected to lead to a common analysis of environmental priorities as an input into negotiations between the Government of Botswana and EEC concerning an aid programme under the third Lomé Convention. In Jordan, joint funding by AGFUND and USAID will enable the Government to launch a pilot project for desertification control and rangelands management in the low-rainfall area. At the end of 1984, UNEP felt that the expectation of obtaining support for the ongoing programmes was sufficiently promising to warrant entering into discussions with additional Governments with a view to preparing further plans and projects in 1985, thanks to continued support from the Government of Sweden and assistance from the Government of Norway.

61. Nevertheless, despite some official declarations, aid agencies are finding it very difficult to increase their commitments for environmental projects to a level commensurate with the needs identified by the clearing-house. Even when special contributions have been earmarked for clearing-house projects (by the Governments of Argentina, the Federal Republic of Germany and the Netherlands and by AGFUND), delays in project approval, essentially by the recipient Government and in some cases by the aid agency itself, have often been excessive.

62. The clearing-house is looking into ways of speeding up the process of project approval through better information on aid channels and aid policies and improved project design.

C. Interrelationships between people, resources, environment and development

63. In this field, work commenced on the development of an action programme for the Himalayan foothills taking into account the interrelationships between people, resources, environment and development; information on the progress to date appears in the annual report of ACC (UNEP/GC.13/5). The trust fund established by the General Assembly to finance activities in this field has received approximately \$300,000 in contributions, \$100,000 of which has been earmarked as first-stage support for the Himalayan foothills activity.

VI. STATUS OF THE FUND

64. From the present perspective, it seems unlikely that contributions to the Environment Fund for 1984 will total more than \$29.5 million. As a result of the upsurge in the value of the dollar, contributions paid in other currencies provided the Fund with approximately \$1 million less than they would have done at 1983 currency values.

65. This phenomenon continues, and at current dollar values it seems likely that another \$0.5 million will be lost in 1985, in spite of the fact that 16 countries have agreed to increase their contributions. Others have indicated that they too would have increased their contributions but for pressing domestic budgetary problems. There are therefore discernible signs of increasing support for higher contributions to the Fund on the part of Governments, although the rise in the dollar and domestic budgetary problems are at the moment preventing this tide of support from manifesting itself in higher receipts in dollar terms.

66. Thus, more than in the past, the uncertain level of resources for programme activities is causing concern. For the current biennium, the resources of the Environment Fund have fallen far short of the \$85 million in contributions specified by the Governing Council at its tenth session as a basis for planning. Instead UNEP may have to be satisfied with a reduced level of resources - probably less than \$60 million. The programme budget for 1986-1987 was prepared on the basis of estimated project expenditure of \$50 million, in keeping with Council decision 12/18. As the Executive Director explained at the time of the adoption of the decision, that level will require contributions of a minimum of \$70 million over the two years. At present the Executive Director has no assurance that this amount will actually be forthcoming. On the contrary, even the approved \$10 million contribution from the major donor to UNEP for 1985 which was formally announced at the United Nations pledging conference held in New York on 8 November 1984 is now being reconsidered with a review to reducing it to \$4.6 million. This obliged the Executive Director to put a complete embargo on project approval and staff recruitment as of 18 February 1985, as he reported to the permanent representatives in his quarterly meeting with them on 20 February 1985. If this cut materializes it will mean the complete paralysis of UNEP programme activities for the whole of 1985.

67. It is true that, in recent years, especially following the decision to establish the clearing-house, additional resources in such forms as trust funds and counterpart contributions have been made available for particular activities to meet very largely the environmental concerns of developing countries. The overall picture is, however, still one of stagnating finances, with a drastic reduction in real terms - at a time when environmental concerns and demands for action by UNEP are multiplying. The Executive Director is therefore anxious that Governments should discuss constructively and decisively how the resources for UNEP activities can be increased, either through contributions to the Environment Fund, through trust funds and counterpart contributions, or through other means. It would also be helpful to secure an indication from Governments of whether and in what way UNEP should attempt to obtain increased and more reliable resources. The Council must certainly keep very clearly in mind the essential need to continue to keep the UNEP programme responsive to and balanced between the various and often conflicting needs of various States and groups of States.

68. The Executive Director wishes to draw to the attention of the Council to another matter with which it is necessary to deal now in preparation for the fourteenth session in 1987. In that year, the programme budget for the

third biennium of the system-wide medium-term environment programme, 1988-1989, will be submitted to the Council. As there will be no session in 1986, it will be necessary for the Council to determine at the present session the financial framework within which the Executive Director will draw up the programme budget for 1988-1989. It will depend in the first instance on the level of contributions which can be estimated to be available over the biennium. Various alternatives can be examined during the consideration of this item. In general, however, it can be said that at the end of the next biennium - 1986-1987 - there will be no funds to be carried over for financing expenditure in 1988-1989, which will consequently have to be met completely from current contributions. A lower level of programme activities resulting in the same level of expenditure of \$50 million as planned for 1986-1987 would, therefore, require contributions of approximately \$80 million, taking into account programme and programme support costs of about \$30 million. It is for the Council to decide on the level of expenditure in 1988-1989 - whether to keep the same level of expenditure irrespective of loss in real terms due to inflation, or allow for inflation rates to be added, or decide upon a certain percentage of real growth. Contribution levels corresponding to any alternatives which the Council may wish to consider can be computed easily by the secretariat on request.

#### VII. IMPLEMENTATION OF COUNCIL DECISIONS

69. An addendum to the present report (UNEP/GC.13/3/Add.3) contains information on the implementation of Governing Council decisions and on resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its thirty-ninth session that call for action by UNEP.

#### VIII. STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

##### A. Emerging environmental issues and environmental events

70. In response to decision 12/3, the Governing Council has before it a report (UNEP/GC.13/4/Add.1) which contains an update of emerging environmental issues dealt with in previous state-of-the-environment reports and a brief description of some additional emerging issues.

71. The report to the Governing Council on environmental events (UNEP/GC.13/4/Add.2) has been prepared in response to Governing Council decision 11/1, section 11, paragraph 5 and contains a description of major chemical industry accidents in 1984: the disaster in Bhopal, the explosion of liquefied natural gas in Mexico City, and the escape of bromine from a faulty pipe at a perfume factory in Geneva, all occurring during the month of November 1984.

##### B. State-of-the-environment reports for 1986 and 1987

72. After a decade and more of effort, many of the activities of UNEP are now producing results - a feedback loop becomes possible. Thus the opportunity arises to use GEMS data for assessments of the state of the environment, and to move to a more objective understanding of what is



happening. The results of several hundred projects supported by UNEP can be analysed to show what has been learnt. Understanding of the linkages between environment and economic and social systems has expanded sufficiently to permit the preparation of state-of-the-environment reports on the linkages to assist policy makers.

73. The Executive Director proposes, for the consideration of the Council, that a state-of-the-environment report should still be published in 1986 (as a document of the 1987 session), covering an item dealing with the social aspects of the environment, such as health and the environment, youth and the environment, women and the environment or labour and the environment. For 1987 the Executive Director wishes to seek the agreement of the Council that, as an experiment, the state-of-the-environment report should take the form of a general survey of what is happening to the environment. Such a survey would be largely based on environmental data collected between 1984 and 1986, the assessment statements which will be published by GEMS in 1985 and 1986, and data and information gathered from respectable world scientific sources. The experiment, if successful, could form the first step towards an authoritative regular World Environment Report. The 1987 report would still include an updating of emerging issues and details of major environmental events. If this proposal is acceptable to the Council, a decision will have to be taken at its thirteenth session on the subject for the 1986 report.

#### IX. LOOKING AHEAD TO 1990

74. A conjunction of circumstances provides UNEP with an opportunity to review its mode of operation and learn from experience, and so increase its effectiveness:

(a) The Governing Council is experimenting with a biennial cycle, with implications for the flow of information to Governments and for the work of the secretariat,

(b) The system-wide medium-term environment programme represented a major conceptual advance in the United Nations system. However, because of time constraints, certain issues were put aside for consideration after the launching of the programme, in the context of a possible mid-term review. It is worth recalling that the programme was meant to include time-bound, objectives and specific targets, and that the cycle of planning, programming, budgeting and evaluation was to contain provision for mid-course corrections,

(c) There is a real possibility that, as a result of a cross-organizational programme analysis of the environmental activities of the United Nations system, to be conducted in 1987, those activities may be revised and, in the process of review, receive fresh visibility at the policy-making level in all the bodies concerned.

75. This conjunction arises as the Executive Director starts a fresh term. Conscious of the opportunity thus presented, he arranged a meeting of his senior staff together with distinguished consultants in a free-ranging examination of how they felt UNEP should develop towards 1990. A number of important issues were highlighted.

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(a) Should target-setting be an important element of the functions of UNEP? If so, what should be the relationship between targets UNEP sets for itself, objectives for the United Nations system which UNEP should propose and upon which UNEP should seek agreement from the organizations concerned, and goals to which Governments commit themselves at the intergovernmental level?

(b) What should be the role of UNEP with regard to environmental catastrophes (e.g. major accidents):

- (i) Collection of facts?
- (ii) Issue of an informed public statement by the Executive Director?
- (iii) Directing the relevant authorities to sources of assistance? - and/or
- (iv) Assistance to Governments in dealing with such catastrophes?

(c) What should be the role of UNEP with regard to environmentally based problems that pose a potential threat to peace - such as desertification, leading to a mass exodus of population from one country into another?

(d) How best can the role and mode of operation of the UNEP secretariat be defined more clearly and understood more widely? (From this decision would stem conclusions regarding the size and structure of the secretariat),

(e) Is it inevitable that the level of funding for UNEP will stagnate, and if so what are the implications? Can new approaches - tapping non-traditional sources of financing, engaging special representatives who specialize in fund-raising, and so on - generate a more adequate level of funding? Should endowment funds be sought, with the interest lent at subsidized rates for environmental investments in developing countries, or should an environment bank be set up for the same purpose? Should all or a certain percentage of the Environment Fund be derived from assessed contributions? How can better use be made of national currencies and contributions in kind in the implementation of regional projects of common interest? (A report on this last topic is to be submitted to the Council in document UNEP/GC.13/3/Add.5).

76. It is worth while to examine some of these issues and their interconnections. The idea that UNEP is "spreading itself too thin" has become the conventional wisdom, and seems to apply mostly to areas of environmental management. The issue is also seen as less significant in terms of obtaining, collating and presenting information than in terms of funding management activities. Any changes to be made in this area would have considerable implications as far as the size of the secretariat and the level of funding are concerned. On the other hand, UNEP has withdrawn from

some areas just when it might have begun to gain credit for the outcome of its interventions. When the question does arise of withdrawing from an area as far as direct funding is concerned, in order to concentrate resources, it will be important to explore alternative ways of maintaining influence and identification with the area at lesser cost. This should be possible by making use of the capacity of UNEP to generate and utilize substantive contributions from its secretariat or from influential outside communities, and by strengthening the role of UNEP in decision-making forums called upon to deal with these areas.

77. The issue raised above also has to do with one's perception of the mission of UNEP. Can UNEP maintain a substantive internal capacity to deal on its own with the full range of environmental issues - or a large and sufficiently significant proportion of that range - so as to remain credible as an environmental programme? This would imply an organization as large as, say, FAO or WHO, and in competition with them. All this is not to say that there are not areas where the only effective way of maintaining credibility is to demonstrate the viability of an approach by implementing it. Yet there are very severe limitations on how many such demonstrations there can be without destroying overall effectiveness.

78. If the answer is that the principal function of UNEP must remain the catalysis and co-ordination of the activities of the entire United Nations system in support of the efforts of the world community, with limited direct activities, then it will be necessary:

(a) To identify clearly, in the light of past experience, how, when, and with what kind of activity UNEP should intervene in order to be most effective;

(b) To determine how existing mechanisms for co-operation in the United Nations system on environmental matters should be improved;

(c) To set defined targets for UNEP, decide upon specific objectives for the United Nations system, and seek agreement to goals at the governmental level;

(d) To identify those who present the environmental challenge to the conventional wisdom in specific areas, and bring to bear their influence and knowledge;

(e) To create common perceptions and promote interaction between environmental actors in Governments, in UNEP, elsewhere in the United Nations system and in the outside communities, with particular attention paid to interaction with groupings of scientists and development managers.

79. The more successfully catalysis and co-ordination can proceed in some areas, the more capacity and resources will be available to deal directly with specific situations. Work in this latter category must include efforts to help developing countries develop the capacity to deal with their environmental concerns, first and foremost through strengthening their environmental machinery; helping them to acquire the knowledge and information they need from outside to take action in the environmental field; and assisting them in identifying their major environmental problems, working out comprehensive integrated programmes for dealing with them and securing the necessary resources to implement those programmes.

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80. The issue of the flow of information to Governments, which is particularly significant as the Governing Council is experimenting with a biennial cycle, should be approached from the point of view of their own requirements. Thus it would seem that the flow of information required to enable Governments to give policy guidance to UNEP may not need augmenting, but that the flow of substantive information on developments in the environment does. Applying this yardstick to present Governing Council documentation, it would seem that the state-of-the-environment reports would need to be maintained as annual publications - perhaps, as suggested above, with an alternating focus on assessment one year and economic and social policy issues the next.

81. The annual ACC reports on the efforts of the United Nations system would also need to be maintained. The Executive Director also proposes to maintain his Annual Report, which would provide the basic information Governments require on developments in UNEP itself. The chapter on the Environment Fund would also include a report on trust funds. The chapter on the implementation of the programme would give a brief summary showing how far the approved programme budget had been implemented, with some financial data, by budget line, showing the apportionments approved by the Governing Council, allocations made by the Executive Director and actual expenditure, with reasons for each figure, and would also explain the constraints encountered in trying to implement the approved programme. One of the two six-monthly reports to Governments could summarize the lessons that had been learnt from the results of projects supported by UNEP.

82. In the absence of a Governing Council session in 1986, the Governing Council in 1987 would need to consider the two Annual Reports of the Executive Director and the two state-of-the-environment reports for 1985 and 1986, and the programme budget for 1988-1989, together with the programme and programme support costs budget and the related United Nations regular budget submission for the same period. The proposals for the programme budget and the programme and programme support costs budget would have to be prepared on the basis of the targets to be set by the Governing Council at its preceding session, i.e. the thirteenth session.

83. Following past practice, and bearing in mind the alignment of medium-term plan periods and preparation cycles which makes the system-wide programme possible, CPC would be expected to consider the United Nations medium-term plan in 1988. The environment chapter of the United Nations medium-term plan would need to be consonant with the system-wide programme. If there were no Governing Council session in 1988, the system-wide programme would need to be developed for Governing Council consideration in 1987, not only adding to the work-load of what already appears to be developing as a very arduous session, but raising a series of questions as to the feasibility of the exercise. Firstly, 1987 would be too early in the medium-term plan preparation cycles of the other organizations in the United Nations system to permit them to embark on an effective formulation exercise, which would have to be carried out in 1986. Secondly, it would not be possible to draw any benefit from the proposed cross-organizational programme analysis, which would probably be ready for consideration by CPC only in 1987. Thirdly, the relevance of a 1990-1995 programme largely prepared four years earlier might well be subject to question. Accordingly, the Governing Council, whether it finally decides in 1987 on the basis of experience to have an annual or biennial cycle, should in any case consider having a session or devising some other means in 1988 for the consideration and approval of the system-wide programme.

## X. MAJOR ISSUES BEFORE THE COUNCIL

84. The Executive Director has sought to share with the Council some considerations he finds relevant to charting the course of UNEP over the next few years. He looks forward to a free-ranging exchange of views within the Council, from which he will endeavour to draw conclusions that will shape the functioning of the secretariat.

85. At the same time, there are a number of specific issues on which the Council will be required to take a stand at its thirteenth session. These issues fall into the customary three general categories: general policy matters, programme matters, and Fund and administration matters. However, in view of the fact that the Council has decided not to hold a session in 1986, several other issues that would normally have to be addressed only next year will have to be decided at the forthcoming session.

### A. General policy matters

86. The Council is invited to:

(a) Take a decision with regard to the proposed action on the 1984 state-of-the-environment report (see UNEP/GC.13/L.7),

(b) Take a decision with regard to the proposed action on the 1985 state-of-the-environment report (UNEP/GC.13/4),

(c) Decide whether the inter-sessional report on the evaluation of "important closed projects and in-depth evaluation of selected projects" (Council decision 12/15, para. 7) should contain an analysis of the results of project evaluation and in addition an analysis of the findings of projects themselves,

(d) Decide whether target-setting should be an important element of the functions of UNEP, and if so what should be the relationship between targets UNEP sets for itself, objectives for the United Nations system which UNEP should propose and upon which UNEP should seek agreement from the organizations concerned, and goals to which Governments commit themselves at the intergovernmental level,

(e) Decide how UNEP can exercise its catalytic and co-ordinating role in the United Nations system more effectively.

### B. Programme matters

87. The Council is invited to consider, with a view to approving, the programme budget for the biennium 1986-1987 (UNEP/GC.13/8), and to set priorities for activities contained therein.

### C. Fund and administration matters

88. The Council is invited to:

(a) Note the performance report on the programme and programme support costs budget for the biennium 1984-1985 (UNEP/GC.13/11) and approve a revised appropriation level for that biennium,

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(b) Consider, with a view to approving, the proposed budget for programme and programme support costs for the biennium 1986-1987 (UNEP/GC.13/12),

(c) Take a decision on Fund management, including approval of an appropriation for Fund programme activities and Fund programme reserve activities for the biennium 1986-1987, and approval of the apportionment of that appropriation (see UNEP/GC.13/13).

89. The Council is also invited to consider whether, bearing in mind the mandate and role of UNEP, the present level of funding is adequate to enable it to carry out the duties and functions assigned to it. Is the level of funding commensurate with the issues to be addressed in the environmental field? If not, how can the level of funding be raised? If more effective fund-raising is the answer, how can this be done? With which, if any, of the proposed means of obtaining additional and (at least partly) more secure resources does the Council agree? How can the best use be made of contributions in national currencies and in kind?

D. Matters arising in 1985 as a consequence of the Council's decision not to hold a session in 1986

90. In view of the fact that the Executive Director will be expected to submit a proposed programme budget for the 1988-1989 biennium to the Governing Council in 1987, the Council will be required at its current session to give guidance to him on the financial framework within which he should draw up such a programme budget.

91. As the Council is to take a final decision at its fourteenth session in 1987 on whether to hold annual or biennial sessions, "in the light of the experience gained in the previous years" (decision 11/2, para. 2 (d)), the Council is invited to decide at its present session how it intends to deal with the consideration in 1988 of the United Nations medium-term plan for 1990-1995 and the consideration and approval of the system-wide medium-term environment programme for the same period. Does the Council feel the need for a session in 1988 to deal with this? If not, how does it propose to handle the matter?

92. Since, as an experiment, there will be no Council session in 1986, what kind of information will Governments be expecting from UNEP during that year? Specifically:

(a) Does the Council agree to maintain annual state-of-the-environment reports, concentrating in even years on economic and social aspects relevant to the environment and in odd years on environmental data and assessment? (If so, it should be noted that the Council will have before it two state-of-the-environment reports in 1987 and in 1989),

(b) The Council is invited to decide on the topic for the state-of-the-environment report for 1986, and also to take a decision as to whether the 1987 report should attempt, as the first World Environment Report, to present a comprehensive survey utilizing, inter alia, the data and results of assessments now becoming available through GEMS,

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(c) Does the Council agree that the Executive Director should continue his Annual Report in 1986, on the understanding that it would be a slightly expanded version, reporting on the implementation of the approved programme budget for 1984-1985 and giving more details on the management of the Environment Fund, together with a report on trust funds? If this is agreed, the Council at its fourteenth session would take up two Annual Reports, one for 1985 and the other for 1986,

(d) Should ACC continue its annual reports to the Council? If so, should it review the policy issues arising in co-ordination matters and present a picture of results achieved and policy measures required?

Note

1/ Governing Council decision 12/3 A of 28 May 1984, preamble.

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