



United Nations Environment Programme

PROGRAMA DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS PARA EL MEDIO AMBIENTE
PROGRAMME DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT
PROGRAMA DAS NAÇÕES UNIDAS PARA O MEIO AMBIENTE

Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP

Subcommittee I

**Nairobi, Kenya
30 October 2003**

Distribution:

Limited

Tuesday 21, October 2003

Original: English

Ongoing Consultations on Document *UNEP/GCSS.VIII/4* on Water, Sanitation and Human Settlements

The present document is a briefing note on the ongoing consultations on document UNEP/GCSS.VIII/4 on water, sanitation and human settlements. This note is to be developed as the background paper intended to stimulate discussion and identify questions of concern to Governments to be addressed by ministers and heads of delegation during their ministerial-level consultations at the eighth special session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (provisional agenda item 6). It is a contribution of the United Nations Environment Programme to the forthcoming session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and a follow up on WSSD.

Briefing Note on the Ongoing Consultations on the GC/GMEF Paper on Water, Sanitation and Human Settlements

*(Reference is also made to
UNEP's Preparations for CSD 12)*

A. Introduction

1. The secretariat briefed the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP (CPR) at its last meeting (17 September 2003) on the steps being taken to prepare the document relating to provisional agenda Item 6 for the eighth special session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GCSS-VIII/GMEF) in Jeju, Republic of Korea. Consultations on the issues to be addressed in the document are underway with governments, agencies and stakeholders at the national, regional and global levels. This briefing note presents to the CPR Subcommittee I the preliminary concepts and possible key issues which have been proposed by the secretariat to facilitate the preparation for the upcoming GC/GMEF at the national, regional and global level and informs the CPR on the consultative process.
2. In tandem with this process, the secretariat is also participating in the UN System-wide exercise of the preparation of the Secretary-General's Reports to CSD12. UNEP's contribution to the Secretary-General's report is to be ready by mid-November. It is important that the GC-VIII/GMEF document on water is in line with UNEP's contribution to the Secretary-General's State of Implementation report.
3. The CPR will receive by the end of November/early December the (i) unedited advance copy of UNEP/GCSS.VIII/4 on water reflecting the outcomes of consultations; (ii) UNEP's input to the Secretary-General's State of Implementation reports to CSD12. The Annexes to this note provide additional information on the general context in which the preparation of the water- related documentation for GCSS-VIII/GMEF is taking place.

B. Background

i) UNEP Water Policy and Strategy

4. The supply and quality of freshwater remains one of the most critical issues of the twenty-first century. This realization prompted the UNEP Governing Council to include freshwater as one of its five areas of focus. The UNEP Water Policy and Strategy provides a basis for addressing the challenges highlighted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development and in the millennium development goals. All three components of the UNEP Water Policy and Strategy, namely assessment, management and coordination of actions, stress the cross-sectoral nature of water issues. One of the goals of the UNEP Water Policy and Strategy is to identify and promote the tools that will address the critical water issues facing humanity.
5. GC-22/GMEF decided, inter alia, to strengthen the freshwater component of the UNEP Water Policy and Strategy and agreed to UNEP's contribution to the MDG Task Force on Water Supply and Sanitation. The activities of the UNEP Coordination Office of the Global

Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA) in relation to sewage were also supported.¹

ii) The World Summit on Sustainable Development and Millennium Development Goals

6. At the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the protection and management of the natural resource base, such as water, for economic and social development was recognized as fundamental. Consequently, it was deemed necessary to implement strategies that include targets adopted at national as well as regional levels to protect ecosystems and to achieve integrated management of land, water and living resources. It was decided that integrated water resource management and water efficiency plans should be developed by 2005 through an integrated water basin approach.

7. The World Summit on Sustainable Development reiterated the Millennium Development Goal to halve, by 2015, the proportion of people who are unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water. A new target on halving the proportion of people without access to basic sanitation by 2015 — not part of the millennium goals — was also set. Elements for a programme of action on sanitation were clearly established in the Plan of Implementation. Both the water and sanitation targets are set out under the Plan of Implementation chapters on poverty eradication and the natural resource base. Water related policies were included in virtually all of the natural resource objectives of the Plan of Implementation.

8. Water is intrinsically interconnected with the eight Millennium Development Goals. Halving by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water is one of the 18 numerical and time-bound targets that are embodied in the eight millennium development goals — a direct recognition of the fact that over a billion of the world's people still lack safe drinking water, while over twice that number have no adequate sanitation. Equally important, water is an essential ingredient to virtually all the other millennium development goals — which range from eradicating extreme poverty and hunger to ensuring environmental sustainability.

9. The United Nations Millennium Project is a three year effort recently launched by the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan to identify the best strategies for meeting the millennium development goals, including the identification of priorities, strategies, organizational means and financing.

C. Eighth special session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum

10. The Eight Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC-VIII/GMEF) is taking place nearly one year after the review, by the GC/GMEF, of the implications for UNEP of the outcomes of the WSSD, including in the field of water. It will take place shortly before the 12th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

11. Acknowledging that there are many water issues that require considered attention by the international community, it is proposed that the 8th Special Session of the Governing

⁽¹⁾ Key relevant GC22 papers are UNEP/GC.22/10/Add.3/Rev.1 Implementing the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development: Water and GC.22/2/Add.3 Water Policy and Strategy of UNEP)

Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum pay particular attention to **the environmental aspects** of a selected number of international water policy issues.⁽²⁾

12. To this end UNEP is conducting a number of informal consultations at the regional and international levels, and with different groups of stakeholders, which will lead to the preparation of the documentation related to water for GCSS-VIII/GMEF. In particular UNEP is conducting these consultations to facilitate:

- a) the GC/GMEF's contribution to reviews and policy discussions, at international and regional levels, on important and emerging water issues and related action, with specific emphasis on the *environmental* aspects of water policies and the centrality of an *ecosystem approach* to water management; and
- b) the GC/GMEF's recommendations with regard to UNEP's contribution to implementation of the water related targets set by the Millennium Development Goals and the WSSD.

13. In the ongoing consultations, special attention is being accorded to the review of progress in the implementation of selected WSSD and Millennium targets, the identification priority concerns, constraints and obstacles, as well as innovative approaches and partnerships that have the potential for wide application and workable approaches for expediting implementation in the areas relating to water, sanitation and human settlements.

14. A non-paper has been prepared to assist in the informal consultations focuses, as previously mentioned in the CPR.

15. The non-paper, for the (regional) informal consultations in preparation of the GCSS-VIII/GMEF, highlights key environmental water issues (section 2), recalls major responses the international community has identified in water-related conferences (section 3), and proposes that the GCSS-VIII/GMEF focuses its discussions on a selected number of water issues under the following categories (section 4): Water assessments; Water and Poverty; Water and Sanitation; Capacity building and technology transfer; Water and human settlements; Changing unsustainable (water) consumption and production.

16. Review and analysis of workable innovative approaches and best-case scenarios are also solicited with the goal to identify innovative environmental approaches and partnerships that have the potential for wide application

17. The regional informal consultations are invited to review the proposals contained in the non-paper for the upcoming GMEF, amend, focus and enhance them, with the goal to come to meaningful discussions and conclusions at the GMEF, impacting on the international environmental policy and action setting in the field of water, including in the framework of the CSD. The Environmental Management Group (EMG), having chosen to focus in the short term on the environmental aspects of water, sanitation and human settlements in keeping with an issue management approach, expressed its views on the approach and the content of the non-paper on water, sanitation and human settlements, at its meeting held in Geneva on 26 September 2003, and discussed EMG's contribution to GCSS-VIII/GMEF and CSD 12.

18. The outcome of the consultations to date indicate that key topics that might be proposed to the GMEF include: water and sanitation along the lines indicated in the non-paper, water and poverty, and ecosystem approaches with reference to the target on IWRM. The ongoing consultations in the regions with Governments and other stakeholders, within the UN System and with the CSD/UNDESA, will provide a firm basis for putting a draft paper

⁽²⁾ UNGA Resolution 53/242 (paragraph 5) welcomes the proposal to institute an annual, Ministerial-level, global environmental forum, in which the participants can gather to review important and emerging policy issues in the field of environment.

before the CPR Subcommittee I for its consideration and provide the GMEF will a solid foundation for addressing agenda item 6: Follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development: contribution of UNEP to the forthcoming session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

D. UNEP's Contribution to CSD 12

19. The thematic clusters for CSD12 are (i) Water (ii) Sanitation and (iii) Human settlements. CSD12 will **review implementation progress** in these areas from Rio to Johannesburg, with the Secretary-General's State of Implementation reports serving as the UN System's key inputs. CSD13 will consider policy options to achieve the targets.

20. UNEP's contribution to CSD12 will review progress in meeting water objectives and targets. With the guidance of the GMEF, UNEP will also look ahead to CSD13 and place emphasis on identifying workable approaches for expediting implementation in the areas related to water, sanitation and human settlements. There are a number of review documents available to assist in preparation of the UNEP input: See Annex I.

21. UNEP is a member of *United Nations Millennium Task Force on Water and Sanitation*, established by the Secretary-General in response to the MDGs. The role of the Task Force is to develop a strategy for meeting for water and sanitation targets in the MDGs. An interim report should be ready by the time of CSD12, and the work of the Task Force will inform UNEP's input to CSD. Emphasis in the UNEP submission to CSD is likely to include:

- a) Ensuring that the implementation of the WSSD targets for water supply and sanitation addresses the environmental dimensions of water supply and sanitation.
- b) Promoting an ecosystem approach to the implementation of the water supply and sanitation, including in the context of IWRM (Integrated Water Resources Management) and ICZM (Integrated Coastal Zone Management).
- c) The financial implications of addressing the environmental aspects of water and sanitation
- d) Strategic approaches to building capacity to address critical environmental issues in the field water, sanitation and human settlements.

22. The secretariat will continue to brief the CPR Subcommittee I on relevant developments in its preparations of the document for GC-VIII/GMEF provisional agenda item 6.

Annex I

UNEP's preparations of the GC/GMEF paper and the input to CSD 12

Indicative list of reviews of the status of implementation of Agenda 21, the programme for its further implementation and the WSSD outcomes facilitated by UNEP (or in which it played a significant role). The outcomes of these reviews/for a will help inform UNEP's ongoing preparations for the special session of the GC/GMEF

- a) In order to determine the status of implementation of the freshwater objectives of chapter 18 on a original basis, UNEP was requested by the then UN Committee on Natural Resources to conduct regional workshops (Sept. 1995 Asia and Pacific; Oct. 1995, West Asia; Oct 1995, Africa; Dec. 1995, Latin America and the Caribbean; Jan. 1996, Eastern Europe). These workshops provided an initial picture of the status of implementation in each of the regions at the time of Rio +5.
- b) UNEP presented to the Governing Council a 10-year estimation of the budgetary implication of implementing agenda 21;
- c) UNEP played a significant role in the convening and conduct of the Second World Water Forum
- d) 2000 – 2001 - UNEP, in close collaboration with intergovernmental bodies, Regional Economic Commissions and major groups supported the preparatory processes for the WSSD. This was based on the UNGA resolution which invited the Governing Council of UNEP to consider how the activities of UNEP were contributing to the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further implementation of Agenda 21;
- e) May 2000 - the Sixth special session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum considered the UNEP report entitled "contribution of UNEP to the implementation of Agenda 21 and the programme for the Further implementation of Agenda 21";
- f) 2001 – UNEP organized the inter-governmental review of the implementation of the Global Programme of Action on Land-based sources of Pollution;
- g) the Executive Director of UNEP released his report entitled "UNEP's contributions to the preparations for the WSSD". UNEP also made a significant contribution to the report of the Secretary-General on the status of implementation of Agenda 21 which was prepared as part of the WSSD preparation;
- h) the 22nd session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum incorporated the WSSD follow-up, including contributions to the CSD, into the 2004 – 2005 work programme;
- i) UNEP played an active role in the preparations for the Third World Water Forum. The Executive Director of UNEP represented the Secretary General of the United Nations at the Forum and also officially launched the World Water Day Celebration for which UNEP played a lead agency role (on behalf of the entire United Nations system).

Annex II

Indicative List of Documents/Activities which will assist in drafting UNEP's GC/GMEF Paper and the Input to CSD

- a) Third report of the UNEP Global Environment Report.
- b) Papers on the UNEP Water Policy and Strategy presented to the 22nd session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum. The papers included a progress report on the implementation of the UNEP Water Policy and Strategy, a discussion paper entitled 'Implementing the outcomes of the WSSD: Water' and a review paper on the implementation of the UNEP Water Policy and Strategy.
- c) World Water Development report - co-authored by UNEP and which provides an authoritative picture of the state of the World Water Resources providing a description of critical problems and options to improve sustainable water resources management. UNEP is also an active partner in the World Water Assessment Programme which is the foundation for the WWDR. The GEO3 report added value to this analysis. UNEP also produced the Atlas of Freshwater Agreements, Vital Water Graphics and Ground Water Vulnerability Assessment
- d) Reports of the UN Water Inter-Agency grouping - UNEP is an active member of this inter-agency mechanism for co-ordination, implementation and follow-up of the water agenda in collaboration with stakeholders.
- e) The UNEP/GPA - via UNEP has undertaken an intergovernmental review status of implementation of the Agenda 21 related programme relating to land-based sources of pollution, particularly, as it relates to water and sanitation.
- f) GEMS/Water Quality Assessment - the goals are to improve water quality monitoring and assessment capabilities in developing countries and to determine the status / strengths of regional/global water quality. It also provides sound information on state and trends of global inland water quality required as a basis for the sustainable management of the World's Freshwater to support global environmental assessment within the context of Agenda 21.
- g) Global International Waters Assessment (GIWA) - the aim is to produce a comprehensive and global assessment of International Waters, the ecological status of and the causes of environmental problems in 66 water areas in the world, focusing on the key issues confronting the aquatic environment in transboundary waters. The GIWA project receives significant (direct and indirect) support from all the Nordic countries.
- h) Water and sanitation in the world's cities - this UN Habitat report was prepared in close collaboration with UNEP and others. It responds to the Habitat Agenda on "Environmentally Sustainable, Health and Livable Human Settlements" and to the MDGs. It presents an analysis of the water and sanitation situation in the world cities and provides policy options for achieving the MDGs. The preparation of the report was supported, inter alia by Sweden and Japan.
- i) Water for Cities Programme - This UN Habitat led programme is being implemented in close collaboration with UNEP with focuses on the growing urban water crisis. The programme is supported by, inter alia, Sweden, Finland, Netherlands and Germany.

- j) United Nations Millennium Task Force on Water and Sanitation - UNEP is a member of this Task Force which was established by the Secretary-General in response to the MDGs. The role of the Task Force is to develop a strategy for meeting for water and sanitation in the MDGs. An interim report should be ready by the time of CSD12.
- k) Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation - this is in response to the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade and facilitates the consolidation of experiences and resources on the status of water supply and sanitation. The programme brings together the UN Habitat, UNEP and donor countries such as the UK.
- l) The outcomes 8th special session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum will include a significant contribution to the CSD12;
- m) Regional and sub-regional meetings - UNEP is playing an active role in the regional preparations/consultations for both the GC/GMEF and CSD 12.
- n) UNEP is also taking part in the ongoing inter-agency consultations conducted, inter-alia within the framework of the UN High level Committee on Programme Coordination, the Environmental Management Group, UN Water as well as in bilateral consultations with the Secretarial i.e UN/DESA of the CSD.

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