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**FOCUS FOR THE MINISTERIAL CONSULTATIONS OF THE TWENTY FIFTH SESSION OF
THE GOVERNING COUNCIL/GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM,
NAIROBI, 16-20 FEBRUARY 2009**

Following consultations with the Bureau of the Governing Council and the Committee of Permanent Representatives, the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has the honour to present the background paper on the focus of the Ministerial Consultations of the twenty-fifth session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, to be held in Nairobi from 16 to 20 February 2009. This document is being provided in support of provisional agenda item 6 (Preparations for the twenty-fifth session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum) of the 104th meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP, to be held on 17 September 2008. This document was agreed by the Bureau of the Council/Forum at its meeting held on 5 September 2008.

**FOCUS FOR MINISTERIAL CONSULTATIONS
OF THE 25TH REGULAR SESSION OF THE GC/GMEF**

Theme I

Globalization and the Environment:

'Global Crises: National Chaos?'

Theme II

International Environmental Governance and United Nations Reform

'IEG: Help or Hindrance?'

Nairobi, February 2009

Overall context

The GC/GMEF is the United Nations high-level environment policy forum that brings the world's environment ministers together to "review important and emerging policy issues in the field of the environment"¹.

The GC/GMEF provides broad policy advice and guidance to, inter alia, "promote international cooperation in the field of environment"² and in doing so it invites officials of United Nations agencies and heads of multilateral environmental agreement secretariats "to participate and interact with ministers at meetings" and also seeks to "promote the meaningful participation of representatives of major groups and non-governmental organizations including the private sector..."³

Since 2000, when the first special session of the GC/GMEF was held, Ministerial Consultations have been held to facilitate ministerial level discussions on a range of "important and emerging issues in the field of the environment", such as International Environmental Governance (2000 and 2008), Water and Sanitation (2003 and 2004), Capacity Building (2004 and 2005), Chemicals (2006), Globalization and the Environment (2007) and Mobilizing Finance to Meet the Climate Challenge (2008).

The theme of the Ministerial Consultations for the 24th session of the GC/GMEF was "Globalization and Environment", which also provided the context for discussions at the 10th special session of the GC/GMEF in 2008. "Globalization and Environment" will also provide the context for the ministerial level discussions in 2009.

The Ministerial Consultations in 2009 will bring the world's Environment Ministers together at a time when all States are tackling the challenges of food, energy and water security in a changing climate. The GC/GMEF will provide the opportunity for Environment Ministers to share their perspectives on how to meet multiple environmental and development challenges at the country level, and to capture the opportunities that might arise; and how national and international environmental governance, including financing mechanisms, could better support such endeavours.

¹ UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/53/242 1999

² General Assembly Resolution 2997 (XXVII) 1971

³ UNEP GC Decision *insert* SAS.VII/2 2002

Theme I

Globalization and the environment:

'Global Crises: National Chaos?'

Context for focus of Ministerial Consultations

Over the past 12 months we have witnessed the emergence of the 'global food crisis' and an international response that has sought to find ways of achieving world food security in the context of climate change and bioenergy.

The 'global food crisis' comes at a time when the world is already grappling with concerns over energy security and the need to diversify energy supply, and heightened concerns over the availability of freshwater to meet growing demands for food and energy.

Such challenges are arising in the context of a changing climate and amid concerns over the collective impacts of 'multiple crises' on achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The UN system and others have sought to address these serious threats to achieving sustainable development and the MDGs through a number of High-level events and processes, including the:

- High-level Conference on World Food Security: The Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy (Rome, June 2008).
- ECOSOC High-level segment of 2008 Thematic Discussion - and a Special Meeting on the 'global food crisis' (New York, July 2008).
- G8 Meeting in Japan (Hokkaido Toyako, July 2008).
- UN High-level Event on the MDGs (New York, September 2008).
- UN Private Sector Forum (New York, September 2008).
- Chief Executives' Board High-level Task Force on the Global Food Crisis (established April 2008).

Much of the response to the 'global food crisis' has targeted immediate and short-term measures, while also recognising the need for medium to long-term measures.

Addressing the fragility of the world's food systems through the lens of environmental sustainability will be central to sustaining future production. Natural resources account for more than 25% of the wealth of low-income countries – and all people whether rich, poor, urban, or rural – rely on natural resources. Ecosystems provide the 'natural resources capital' needed for development and the state of ecosystems is inextricably linked to human well-being, including the aspects of poverty and health.

Increasingly, there is evidence that investment in environmental management results in increased income generation for the rural poor. Unsustainable land and water use, and the impacts of climate change are driving land degradation, including soil erosion, nutrient depletion, water scarcity, salinity, chemical contamination and disruption of biological cycles. The cumulative effects of these changes threaten food security, biodiversity, carbon fixation and storage, and human health.

The scale of the combined challenges presented by degradation of the agricultural production base on the one hand and increased numbers of people with changing, more resource intensive food preferences, means that solutions have to be developed with reference to both the production and consumption of food. The globalisation of markets, business operations and growth in the size of processors and retailers of food, with greater influence over the development of the sector and shaping of markets and consumer preferences, also means that the private sector will have to be actively engaged in the development of solutions. These challenges are being addressed by the development of a 10-year framework of programmes to support regional and national initiatives to shift towards sustainable consumption and production". This framework is being developed through the **Marrakech Process**, mandated under the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, agreed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

The 'Declaration of the High-level Conference on World Food Security: The Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy' high lighted the fragility of the world's food systems and their vulnerability to shocks, declaring that, inter alia: "It is essential to address the fundamental question of how to increase the resilience of present food production systems to challenges posed by climate change. In this context, maintaining biodiversity is key to sustaining future production performance...We support the establishment of agriculture systems and the sustainable forest management practices that positively contribute to the mitigation of climate change and ecological balance."

The response to the 'global food crisis', and other threats to achieving sustainable development and the MDGs, suffers from lack of coherence at all levels – from within the UN system to within governments at every tier. Coherence – or a lack thereof – is mutually reinforcing.

ECOSOC, through the Ministerial Declaration from its substantive session of 2008, 'Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to sustainable development' noted the serious challenge posed by the 'global food crisis' to the fight against poverty and hunger and achieving the relevant MDGs, and the importance of a comprehensive and coordinated response in the short and medium to long-term by national governments and the international community. The same Ministerial Declaration reaffirmed the commitment to identify and accelerate concrete actions to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The High-level Event on the MDGs to be convened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the President of the General Assembly in September 2008 will include a roundtable on Environmental Sustainability, with the Background Note prepared by the Secretary-General 'Committing to action: achieving the Millennium Development Goals' calling for greater coherence among polices concerning agriculture, forestry, energy, tourism and natural resource conservation, with the UN Private Sector Forum to address how business can contribute to achieving the MDGs, with a particular focus on food sustainability.

The impacts of climate change and the need for adaptation measures is linked to food, water and energy security, all of which require responses at the country level, as well as cooperation at the regional and global levels to shift towards sustainable consumption and production (SCP). Efforts to improve the health of ecosystems are one way of adapting to climate change, and yield multiple environmental, economic, and social benefits. The need to enhance adaptation measures has gained increasing recognition over the past 12 months, including through the outcomes of the ongoing UNFCCC negotiations.

Each of these issues is of profound relevance to UNEP and its role in promoting the environmental pillar of sustainable development and aligns with its programmatic priorities for 2010-2011 of: climate change; disasters and conflicts; ecosystem management – including the linkages between the state of ecosystems and human well-being; environmental governance; harmful substances and hazardous wastes; and resource efficiency – sustainable consumption and production.

Effectively tackling the challenges of food, energy and water security in a changing climate requires a coordinated response at the country level from within the UN, with financing institutions and mechanisms, including the World Bank and the GEF, and from MEAs, including the UNFCCC, the UNCCD and the CBD. But how:

- does a comprehensive and cohesive response come together at the country level;
- are complementary initiatives addressed in the context of sustainable development;
- can the 10-year framework of programmes (10YFP) on SCP – being developed under the Marrakech Process – support a coordinated country level response;
- are co-benefits and opportunities identified and achieved; and
- does the international governance architecture, including financing mechanisms, facilitate cohesive and coordinated delivery at the country level?

Background materials

The UNEP Secretariat will draw upon available materials to generate background papers, including from the following sources:

- High-level Conference on World Food Security: The Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy.
- ECOSOC High-level segment of 2008 Thematic Discussion, including on mainstreaming the gender perspective into policies and programmes.
- G8 Meeting in Japan ('G8 Leaders Statement on Global Food Security').
- UN High-level Event on the MDGs.
- UN Private Sector Forum.
- Chief Executive's High-level Task Force on the Global Food Crisis: Comprehensive Framework for Action.
- The Marrakesh Process – elements of the draft 10 year framework of programmes on SCP most relevant to food production, energy and water use.
- The International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD).
- World Bank 'World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development.'
- Preparations for CSD 17 on Agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification, and Africa.
- UNDP 'Environment and Energy for Sustainable Development' and World Bank 'Environmental Sustainability' evaluations, and 'One UN' pilot evaluations.

Ministerial Consultations

'Globalization and the Environment – *'Global Crises: National Chaos?'* will be the principal topic of the 25th Session of the GC/GMEF. It will provide the world's environment ministers with the opportunity to address in a comprehensive manner how:

- To meet multiple environmental and development challenges at the country level, and to capture the opportunities that might arise; and
- National and international environmental governance, including financing mechanisms, could better support such endeavours.

In addition to the GC/GMEF participants, it is proposed to invite:

- selected Ministers of agriculture/climate change/energy/water/gender;
- heads of UN and other intergovernmental organizations dealing with agriculture, climate change, food, energy and water issues;
- UN Resident Coordinators;
- CEOs from the private sector;
- heads of financing mechanisms and private foundations;
- leaders of trade unions and civil society; and
- experienced international civil servants and public sector officials dealing with agriculture/climate change/food/energy/water/gender issues and other high profile individuals as appropriate.

The discussion will focus on the objectives of how, in a just and equitable manner, to create enabling and sustainable governance, policy and regulatory environments at the country level to facilitate:

- Comprehensive and coherent responses to achieving food, energy and water security in a changing climate;
- Adapting to climate change, especially for countries that are most vulnerable;
- Achieving multiple environmental and development objectives; and
- Identifying the linkages to wealth generation, poverty eradication, human health, gender relations and environmental gains through the medium to long-term responses to the 'global food crisis'.

Background materials will be provided well in advance of the Session to enable Ministers to be fully prepared for the discussion.

Format for discussion

The format will include a range of different approaches, namely structured presentations from experts to the Plenary, moderated expert panel sessions to the Plenary, a small number of Ministerial roundtables (no more than four), including representatives from civil society and the private sector, and that will be professionally moderated and supported by experts, and special side events. A feature of the discussions will be the opportunity for Ministers to engage in a dialogue with senior UN officials, the private sector and civil society.

Outcomes

The formal outcome of the GC/GMEF will be a President's Summary that reflects a broad based understanding amongst all participants of the range of governance, policy and regulatory options to meet multiple environmental and development challenges and opportunities at the country level.

Other significant outcomes are likely to include:

- Insights into how to coherently address a range of inter-related environmental and development threats;
- Understanding of the vulnerability of developing and least developed countries to climate change and necessary adaptation measures;
- Drawing attention to key SCP programmes that could be included in the 10YFP and providing guidance on strengthening elements of the 10 YFP that are most critical for food, energy and water security;
- Public policy and regulatory best practices to Ministers for national application, including insights into options for the sustainable production of biomass for biofuels; and
- Guidance on how UNEP can address global public policy priorities, facilitate the coherent response to multiple environmental and development challenges at the country level.

Other outcomes may include joint initiatives being launched between Member States, UN Agencies, and other stakeholders, and tangibly demonstrating the economic, social and environmental benefits of addressing medium to long-term responses to the 'global food crisis' through the mass media.

Theme II

International Environmental Governance and United Nations Reform

'IEG: Help or Hindrance?'

Context for focus of Ministerial Consultations

Over the past 12 months there have been a number of formal and informal discussions and processes taking place on the current and possible future architecture of International Environmental Governance (IEG).

Recent developments have served to further highlight the incremental approach taken to addressing IEG over the past 35 years. While this has resulted in many significant achievements, it has also led to fragmentation in how the international community has, amongst other matters:

- invested in environment issues – UNEP, World Bank, UNDP, GEF, MEAs etc;
- managed the science – multiple MEA subsidiary bodies, GEF STAP, etc.;
- engaged in capacity building efforts – between agencies, programmes and MEAs; and
- located its core environmental presence – between Bonn, Geneva, Montreal, Nairobi, Washington etc.

As such, concerns have been expressed over a lack of critical mass – in resources, science, or capacity etc. – which has both entrenched and reinforced the sense of a lack of coherence. There has also been a deficit in the implementation of what has been agreed to by the international community and how the gender perspective has been mainstreamed.

Today, we are witnessing a renewed interest in the IEG debate for a variety of reasons – including heightened concerns over a lack of coherence in the system, and the mounting evidence that environmental degradation is now severely hindering efforts to achieve sustainable development and the MDGs, and in particular as a result of climate change. The renewed interest in IEG is also a response to paragraph 169 of the World Summit 2005 Outcomes document that addressed the issue of achieving stronger system-wide coherence within the UN system.

The debate has however largely focused around an international dialogue that is remote from the real life challenges that are confronting States. In addressing threats to food, energy and water security, and in grappling with the impacts of climate change, States are now dealing with an array of UN agencies, financial institutions and mechanisms, MEAs, private sector interests, and civil society organizations, and the lack of coherence in the system is increasingly being felt at country level.

Does the current IEG architecture, including financing mechanisms, help States in meeting the challenges to achieving sustainable development and the MDGs or does it serve to hinder such efforts? What would a future country responsive IEG architecture require?

Background materials

A series of background papers will be prepared by the Secretariat to facilitate discussions:

- Recent IEG developments: this paper will summarise all recent developments *including* those occurring within the: United Nations General Assembly, the World Bank, Commonwealth Secretariat and through various informal consultative processes, and will reference how the gender perspective has been reflected.
- Global environmental goals: this paper will provide a compilation of the most important existing internationally agreed environmental objectives, goals, and targets.
- Responses to meeting global environmental goals: this paper will provide a factual record of the demands on States in meeting internationally agreed environmental objectives, goals, and targets, and the outputs of selected MEAs over the period of 15 years from 1992-2007.

Ministerial Consultations

International Environmental Governance and United Nations Reform ‘IEG: Help or Hindrance?’ will be the second topic of the 25th Regular Session of the GC/GMEF. It will provide the world’s environment ministers with the opportunity to:

- Obtain a comprehensive update on all of the recent IEG developments;
- Reflect upon existing agreed global environmental goals, and the current response to meeting these goals;
- Address IEG in the context of responding to the needs and priorities of countries; and
- Consider the various discussions, processes and IEG options that are being addressed.

In addition to the GC/GMEF participants, it is proposed to invite:

- selected Ministers of agriculture/climate change/energy/water/gender;
- heads of UN and other intergovernmental organizations dealing with agriculture, climate change, food, energy and water issues;
- UN Resident Coordinators;
- CEOs from the private sector;
- heads of financing mechanisms and private foundations;
- leaders of trade unions and civil society; and
- experienced international civil servants and public sector officials dealing with agriculture/climate change/food/energy/water/gender issues and other high profile individuals as appropriate.

Format for discussion

The format will be structured to provide presentations from experts to the Plenary.

Outcomes

The formal outcome of the GC/GMEF will include a President’s Summary that reflects a broad based understanding amongst all participants of the current state of the debate on IEG, the impact of the current IEG architecture on meeting environmental and development challenges at the country level, the next steps to be taken in the debate, and the ongoing role of UNEP in advancing the discussions.