



Strengthening the environment in the UN

ANPED and Stakeholder Forum welcome the presentation by the Swiss and Mexican Ambassadors of the draft GA resolution to follow up paragraph 169 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document.

In response to the original Building Blocks paper, FBOMS, Stakeholder Forum and UN NGLS collected together stakeholder views in a paper presented to the General Assembly Informal Session in September 2007. The paper was called 'Options for strengthening the environmental pillar of sustainable development¹.'

This draft resolution had some very clear recommendations which ANPED and Stakeholder Forum would like to respond to for this meeting of 21 May. We have collected our responses under the each of the building blocks in the paper.

Strengthening Assessment, monitoring and early warning capacity

The resolution reiterates that UNEP is the leading agency within the UN for the analysis of the global environment and assessment of global and regional environmental trends. It invites UNEP Governing Council to create a Chief Scientific Capacity to be responsible for convening leading scientists from within and outside the UN system.

This is not as far as was being suggested last September when the position of Chief Scientist was being considered and it is unclear how at this point this differs from the DEWA within UNEP at present. Perhaps an opportunity of looking for a Chief Risk Analyst has been missed. There is also the support for Environment Watch Strategy which would bring together the scientific work of the MEAs with UNEP under an MOU. Something stakeholders supported in September last year.

Coordination and cooperation at the levels of agencies

This section attempts to strengthen UNEP's role in relation to other bodies within the UN system and outside. Stakeholders in September called for the strengthening of the Environmental Management Group with a new mandate which the resolution clearly does. Placing the 'EMG' under the management of the UNEP Executive Director strengthens the role of UNEP as coordinator and facilitator of environment within the UN system. The

¹ See http://www.stakeholderforum.org/fileadmin/files/169_paper_final_version.pdf

suggestion that the EMG meet twice a year under the UN Secretary General highlight the critical need for the system to operate as one in a set of growing environmental problems.

This addressed the question asked by stakeholders in September in relationship to the role EMG might have to the Chief Executives Board. What was not addressed in the resolution was the relationship between the EMG and UN Water, UN Oceans and UN Energy. Perhaps the former three would be better coordinated through a reestablishing of the Interagency Committee on Sustainable Development.

The underlining of a more active role for UNEP with UNDP at the country level under the Bali Strategic Plan is something that stakeholders supported in September as critical to ensure that developing countries have access to the appropriate capacity to address the critical issues facing us today and in the future. Perhaps this will mean much more sustainable development within poverty reduction strategies in the future. Stakeholders suggested in September that perhaps a merging in the long term of the EMG and the UN Development Group into a Sustainable Development Group might be worth considering.

The draft UN resolution also stresses the need for an enhanced role of UNEP in international economic, trade and financial institutions. The recommendation that UNEP and the MEAs ask to be formal observers on all the relevant Committees of the WTO is to be welcomed. Perhaps this will enable the recognition that the WTO should not have a mandate to set the rules or criteria that might restrict the use or national implementation of any trade measures agreed to in MEAs. Ultimately the CSD should request that the WTO assess the impact of WTO rules on the promotion of sustainable development policies.

Multilateral Environmental Agreements

The draft UN resolution builds on work already underway in the area of clustering UN Conventions. It asks UNEP to identify clusters for future strengthening of cooperation and coordination. There are some good examples of this already published within input to the Cartagena process and in NGO and academic papers.

Perhaps one of the most far reaching suggestions in the resolution is that of the ED of UNEP to manage the Secretariats of the Conventions in the most cost effective manner and to take a proactive role in enabling synergies among the conventions. This will enable the ED of UNEP to start to bring back together the Environmental family under one house.

Regional presence and activities at the regional level

The call for strengthening the regional presence of UNEP and the cooperation with other key regional players is to be supported as a whole as it gives UNEP a clear base to offer capacity building in the regions.

Bali Strategic Plan

The resolution urges much more of a one UN approach to building capacity within countries under the Bali Plan and therefore recognizes that not only can UNEP not do everything on the environment, it shouldn't as it is not an operational agency. Drawing on UNDP, WHO, FAO and others will only strengthen the implementation of the Bali Plan at a national or local level.

Information technologies, partnerships and advocacy

The resolution urges the use of state of the art information technology within UNEP and its regional offices. This should be surely a no brainer. Any effective organization needs to upgrade every few years to utilize the new tools that are available.

Financing

When NGOs have more money than UNEP (Greenpeace, WWF) there is something seriously wrong about the global agency for the environment as far as funding is concerned. The suggestion of doubling the contribution from the regular budget is to be welcomed but is not enough. The suggestion that all MEAs should have funding within the GEF, and that the GEF should expand its scope of activity to include this within the fifth replenishment period, is an issue for discussion. Perhaps a review of the GEF and the use of funds it has at the moment and in particular their geographical distribution should be seen before moving forward on this.

Finally

The Building Blocks paper that the Swiss and Mexican Ambassadors tabled last August was one of the best documents that has been produced on reform of the UN in the area of environment. The draft resolution that was tabled on Friday is to be welcomed, many of the ideas put forward by stakeholders can be seen within the paper as can more importantly those of governments. If the explanation of the paper by the Ambassadors on Friday turns out to be correct that they have tried to table a draft resolution that is as close as they can see to what governments would accept, then UNEP will be in a much stronger place this time next year and will have the possibility to retake its role as the custodian of the environment envisioned in 1972 when it was set up.

Other publications on IEG

1. A NEW UNEP? – May 13th Outreach Issues – ANPED and Stakeholder Forum.
see <http://sdin-ngo.net/publications/outreachissues.html> .
2. OPTIONS FOR STRENGTHENING THE ENVIRONMENT PILLAR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT Compilation of Civil Society Proposals on the Institutional Framework for the United Nations’ Environmental Activities. Compiled by: Stakeholder Forum for A Sustainable Future, Brazilian Forum of NGOs and Social Movements for Environment and Development, Northern Alliance for Sustainability, and the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service September 2007.
see http://www.stakeholderforum.org/fileadmin/files/169_paper_final_version.pdf .
3. THE UN SYSTEM AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: Proposals for a Sustainable Development Institutional Initiative. By: Stakeholder Forum for A Sustainable Future, Brazilian Forum of NGOs and Social Movements for Environment and Development, Northern Alliance for Sustainability, and the UN Non-Governmental Liaison 24 April 2007.
see http://ieg.stakeholderforum.org/fileadmin/files/CSD_paper_version_5.pdf .
4. International Environmental Governance A Briefing Paper. Stakeholder Forum, February 2007. see <http://www.unedforum.org/publications/reports/IEG-SFpaper.pdf> .
5. STRENGTHENING THE JOHANNESBURG IMPLEMENTATION TRACK. Considerations for enhancing the Commission on Sustainable Development’s Multi Year Programme of Work. Stakeholder Forum, April 2006.
see <http://www.stakeholderforum.org/CSDAprilReport.pdf> .
6. CSD PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE. Stakeholder Forum, October 2005.
see <http://www.stakeholderforum.org/CSD/csd.php> .

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