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**Governing Council -  
of the United Nations  
Environment Programme**

**Twelfth special session of the Governing Council/  
Global Ministerial Environment Forum**  
Nairobi, 20–22 February 2012  
Item 4 of the provisional agenda\*

**Emerging policy issues: environment and development**

**Enhanced coordination across the United Nations system,  
including the Environment Management Group**

**Report of the Executive Director**

*Summary*

Pursuant to paragraph 4 of decision 26/11 of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme, the document provides a progress report on the work of the Environment Management Group and suggests that the Council adopt a decision in that regard.

The report is presented together with directions for further work, as decided by the senior officials of the Group at their seventeenth meeting, on 19 September 2011. It presents information on the Group's contribution to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in terms of enhanced coherence in programming environmental activities in the United Nations system, including mainstreaming, and enhanced sustainability of policies, management practices and operations in the United Nations system.

\* UNEP/GCSS.XII/1.

## I. Suggested action

1. The Governing Council may wish to consider the adoption of a decision along the following lines:

*The Governing Council,*

*Recognizing* the role of the United Nations Environment Programme in enhancing coordination and collaboration across the United Nations system to achieve greater coherence in environmental activities,

*Recalling* its decision 26/11, on enhanced coordination across the United Nations system, including the Environment Management Group,

*Welcoming* the efforts of the Executive Director, including in his capacity as Chair of the Environment Management Group, and those of the Group's members, in promoting cooperation across the United Nations system on environmental activities,

*Expressing appreciation* for the progress report prepared under the guidance of the senior officials of the Environment Management Group at their seventeenth meeting and as presented by the Executive Director,<sup>1</sup>

*Commending* the Group on its progress in facilitating cooperation across the United Nations system to assist Member States in implementing the environmental agenda,

*Welcoming* in particular the Group's contribution to the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and its decision to continue its support for the drylands agenda across the United Nations system,

*Welcoming also* the Group's contribution to the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development through its reports "Working towards a Balanced and Inclusive Green Economy: A United Nations System-wide Perspective" and "Advancing the Environmental and Social Sustainability in the UN System",<sup>2</sup>

1. *Supports* the Group's continued efforts to mainstream environmental considerations into activities at the programme, management and operational levels in close cooperation with the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and its subsidiary bodies;

2. *Encourages* the Group to continue to promote coherence in environmental activities across the United Nations system, including by mainstreaming environmental concerns into sectoral programmes, through such measures as:

(a) Contributing to the implementation of the international agenda on biodiversity and, in particular, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at its tenth meeting;<sup>3</sup>

(b) Preparing a United Nations system-wide action plan for the period 2012–2018 on follow-up to its report on drylands<sup>4</sup> for consideration by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, at its eleventh session;

(c) Supporting consideration by Member States of the concept of the green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, one of the themes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development;

3. *Also encourages* the Group to continue its consultations on advancing the framework for environmental and social sustainability in the United Nations system and to move towards environmental sustainability management systems and climate neutrality in the United Nations;

4. *Requests* the Executive Director in his capacity as Chair of the Group to provide a progress report on the Group's work to the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum at its twenty-seventh session;

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1 UNEP/GCSS.XII/10.

2 To be published on the Group's website at [www.unemg.org](http://www.unemg.org).

3 Decision X/2, annex.

4 "Global Drylands: A UN system-wide response".

5. *Invites* the Executive Director in his capacity as the Chair of the Group to transmit a progress report on the Group's work to the governing bodies of the Group's member organizations, through the heads of those organizations, for their information and perusal.

## II. Introduction

2. The Governing Council, in its decision 26/11 on enhanced coordination across the United Nations system, including the Environment Management Group, expressed appreciation for a progress report prepared under the guidance of the senior officials of the Group at their sixteenth meeting and presented by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). It commended the Group on its progress in facilitating cooperation across the United Nations system to assist Member States in implementing the environmental agenda.

3. In referring to the need for continued cooperation with the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and its subsidiary bodies, the Council encouraged the Group to continue to promote coherence in programming environmental activities in the United Nations system, including by mainstreaming environmental concerns into sectoral programmes. It encouraged further work in the area of biodiversity, desertification, the green economy and sustainability in the United Nations system, and requested the Executive Director in his capacity as Chair of the Group to submit a progress report on the Group's work to the Council/Forum at its twelfth special session.

4. The present progress report may assist the Council in performing its mandate of providing general policy guidance for the direction and coordination of environmental programmes within the United Nations system, as set out in General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 15 December 1972. In this context, the Council may consider its role in contributing to the coherence of the environmental pillar. It may wish again to express itself on the directions that the Group's further work should take, given that the Group's members, as demonstrated in the report on environment in the United Nations system (UNEP/GC.26/INF/23), constitute a unique and diverse set of environmental capacity and competence. In doing so, it may also wish to further the practice of informing the General Assembly of the Group's work pursuant to resolution 58/209 of 23 December 2003.

5. The seventeenth meeting of the senior officials of the Group took place in New York on 19 September 2011, during the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly. It was hosted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and co-chaired by Mr. Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP and Chair of the Environment Management Group, and Ms. Rebeca Grynspan, Under-Secretary-General and Associate Administrator of UNDP. The senior officials segment was preceded by a technical segment. The documentation and report of the meeting can be found at [www.unemg.org](http://www.unemg.org).

6. At that meeting, the senior officials considered the strategic directions for the Group's work in the light of progress made and expectations voiced by Group members and by intergovernmental bodies such as the Governing Council. They welcomed the opportunity to inform the Governing Council and, through it, the General Assembly, of their work. They expressed appreciation for the guidance received from the Council and requested the Chair to continue the practice of circulating a draft of the Group's report on its work to Group members for their comments, and to submit the final report to the Governing Council at its twelfth special session. They encouraged the Group members to make the report available to their governing bodies as appropriate.

7. The present report, which has been reviewed by the Group members pursuant to a decision taken at the seventeenth meeting, sets out the progress made in implementing the Group's workplan to date and the directions set by the senior officials in relation to the workplan for the coming period. The workplan is implemented through open-ended, time-bound issue management groups and consultative processes.

8. All the reports and/or publications referred to herein are available on the Group's website at [www.unemg.org](http://www.unemg.org).

## III. Contributions by the Group to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

9. At their seventeenth meeting, the senior officials noted that the Group's work and products were receiving increased attention in intergovernmental processes. It was felt that Group was well placed to contribute to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, especially in the area of green economy, through the report "Working towards a Balanced and Inclusive Green Economy: A United Nations System-wide Perspective".

10. The Group also resolved to continue its work in advancing the agenda for environmental and social sustainability in the United Nations based on the report “Advancing the Environmental and Social Sustainability of the UN system”. It agreed that the matter should also be brought to the attention of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination through the appropriate channels.

11. It was noted that the Group’s achievements were relevant to discussions on the institutional framework on sustainable development, especially in relation to the future shape of an inter-agency cooperation structure for sustainable development and its interface with intergovernmental entities. It was recognized that the Group’s achievements resulted from, among others:

(a) Its focus on the enhancement of human well-being, which had served as a common denominator of relevance to the mission of all Group members and as such had functioned as an agent of integration;

(b) Its interaction with relevant intergovernmental bodies, which had helped the Group to support Member States in advancing the international environmental agenda in a balanced manner;

(c) Its issues-focused approach, a jointly owned agenda and a facilitative support structure, which had helped bring member agencies together.

12. Upon the senior officials’ request, the Executive Director, in his capacity as Chair of the Group, submitted a response to the invitation from the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development at its second session. That response described the Group’s work on the green economy and on the development of a framework for environmental and social sustainability in the United Nations system, and set out Group members’ views on the lessons learned from the revitalization of the Group, to serve as input into the institutional framework for sustainable development.

#### **IV. Enhanced coherence in programming environmental activities in the United Nations system, including mainstreaming**

##### **A. Issue management group on biodiversity**

13. At their sixteenth meeting, the senior officials decided to continue the work of the issue management group on biodiversity based on the report “Advancing the biodiversity agenda – a UN system-wide contribution”. The report was submitted to and acknowledged by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in its decision X/2. By its decision X/8, the Conference called upon the Group to contribute to the international decade on biodiversity 2011–2021. By its decision X/2, it also invited the Group, “in building on its report to the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to identify measures for effective and efficient implementation of the Strategic Plan across the United Nations system and provide a report on its work to the Conference of the Parties at its eleventh meeting through the Working Group on Review of Implementation and the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice”.

14. Actions have also been encouraged by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Bureau and the Subsidiary Body on Scientific Technical and Technological Advice of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

15. By its decision 26/11, the UNEP Governing Council welcomed in particular the Group’s contribution to the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and its follow-up decision to continue its support for the implementation of the biodiversity agenda across the United Nations system. It also encouraged the Group to contribute to the international agenda on biodiversity, including in the implementation of the relevant decisions of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at its tenth meeting.

16. At their fourth meeting, held on 16 February 2011 and co-chaired by the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Secretary-General of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the members of the issue management group on biodiversity agreed to map their current activities and initiatives in support of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020, with a view to providing a basis for an agreed approach to an effective and efficient United Nations system-wide contribution to the Strategic Plan, possibly in the form of an implementation plan. The Environment Management Group secretariat was tasked with circulating a matrix for that purpose.

17. At their seventeenth meeting, the senior officials noted the high expectations with regard to the Group’s ability to deliver results in the area of inter-agency cooperation on biodiversity. They also

noted the efforts by the issue management group on biodiversity to align implementation of the report “Advancing the biodiversity agenda – a UN system-wide contribution” with support for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020, and requested the Group to accelerate its efforts to develop a practical and pragmatic approach to the implementation of the tasks entrusted to it, and to report on progress to the Secretary-General, the UNEP Governing Council and the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

18. The senior officials decided to extend the issue management group’s work until 2012 and to expand its terms of reference to include a wider and longer-term coordination role, so as to advance synergies and inter-agency cooperation on biodiversity in close coordination with existing mechanisms such as the Liaison Group of the Biodiversity-related Conventions and the United Nations Development Group. They also invited the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity to serve as a permanent co-chair of the issue management group with other members serving as co-chairs on a rotational basis.

19. At its fifth meeting, held in Montreal, Canada, on 9 November 2011 in the margins of the fifteenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the Convention on Biological Diversity and co-chaired by representatives of the secretariat of that convention and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the issue management group agreed on a United Nations system-wide approach to map the foundation for supporting the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020. Such mapping would provide a picture of the United Nations system-wide support for the targets, which would then serve a basis for inter-agency cooperation for the provision of support for the implementation of the targets, including cooperation at the national level in support of national biodiversity strategies and action plans. At its sixth meeting, to be convened in Paris at the invitation of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the group will discuss its actions and progress.

## **B. Issue management group on land**

20. The senior officials established an issue management group on land in 2009, with a focus on drylands, to propose modalities for a United Nations system-wide contribution to the implementation of the 10-year strategic plan of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa. By its decision 26/11, the Governing Council encouraged Group to prepare a United Nations system-wide contribution to the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention.

21. The issue management group met twice electronically to conclude a working draft of its report on drylands, which was then presented as a conference room paper and at a side event during the second special session of the Committee on Science and Technology of the Convention and the ninth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention, on 17 February 2011 in Bonn, Germany. The aim was to solicit views and guidance from parties and agencies on the report and on next steps. Member States took note of the draft report with appreciation.

22. The Environment Management Group was recognized at the session as a key and specific vehicle for increasing complementarity and synergies among the Rio conventions.<sup>5</sup> The parties proposed that the Convention secretariat should take steps to ensure that the views expressed would be compiled and annexed to the report for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its tenth session, to be held in Changwon, Republic of Korea, from 10 to 21 October 2011. Issues raised by member States and stakeholders were taken into account when finalizing the report.

23. At their seventeenth meeting, the senior officials welcomed with appreciation the preparation by the issue management group of the report “Global Drylands: A UN system-wide response” and approved the report, including the statement by the executive heads of Group’s member organizations, which was then submitted to the Conference of the Parties at its tenth session. They decided to continue the issue management group’s work for another two years with a view to implementing the findings of the report and the statement by the executive heads, and responding to any requests made by participants at the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on addressing desertification, land degradation and drought in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication held on 20 September 2011, by the Conference of the Parties at its tenth session and by participants in the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. The group could also consider other land-related issues that warranted its action.

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<sup>5</sup> See document ICCD/CRIC(9)/INF.9 and para. 38 of document ICCD/CRIC(9)/16, which invites support for the establishment of partnership agreements with, and synergistic initiatives in, the three Rio conventions.

24. The drylands report was presented as an information document (ICCD/CRIC(10)/INF.1) for further consideration and guidance by the Conference of Parties at its tenth session. The Conference of the Parties took note of the report and requested the Executive Secretary to follow up on its implementation in close cooperation with the Environment Management Group and to prepare a specific 2012–2018 action plan on that follow-up for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its eleventh session.

### **C. Issue management group on the green economy**

25. The issue management group on the green economy was established by the senior officials at their fifteenth meeting to assess how the United Nations system could more coherently support countries in making the transition to a green economy and to work on joint and consistent messaging on measures needed to support the transition.

26. A progress report on the group's work was made available to participants at the first intersessional meeting of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, on 10 and 11 January 2011. By its decision 26/11, the Governing Council encouraged the Environment Management Group to prepare a contribution by the United Nations system, identifying existing studies on the green economy, to the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

27. Thirty-five members of the United Nations system have been engaged, through the issue management group, in drafting a report on the green economy. At their seventeenth meeting, the senior officials welcomed the progress made by the group, including its submission of a preliminary report to the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development at its second session, on 7 and 8 March 2011. They requested the group:

(a) To reflect United Nations system-wide perspectives on the issue in the report, to be entitled "Working Towards a Balanced and Inclusive Green Economy: A UN System-wide Perspective";

(b) To draft an executive summary of the main findings of the report, and of the joint preamble statement of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, for appropriate consideration during the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, by 1 November;

(c) To finalize the report for approval by members in time for the second intersessional meeting of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, on 15 and 16 December 2011.

28. The senior officials decided to extend the group's work for another year for it to finalize and submit the report and follow up on the report's recommendations, taking into account any follow-up work that might be requested by the Conference. The Group's work in this respect has been submitted as part of the preparatory process for the Conference.

### **D. Consultations on the environmental pillar of the institutional framework on sustainable development**

29. By its decision 26/1, on international environmental governance, the Governing Council invited the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, in its consideration of the institutional framework for sustainable development, to consider the options for broader institutional reform identified in the Nairobi-Helsinki Outcome of the Consultative Group of Ministers or High-level Representatives on International Environmental Governance as a contribution to strengthening the institutional framework for sustainable development by improving international environmental governance.

30. A report on progress in following up on that decision was provided to the senior officials at their seventeenth meeting. They expressed interest in being kept informed of international environmental governance reform efforts, especially on issues of relevance to the Group's role in contributing to a balanced integration of the economic, environmental and social pillars in the institutional framework for sustainable development.

31. They requested the Executive Director to submit the views expressed during the meeting on the institutional framework on sustainable development and the Group's future role in advancing the inter-agency dimension of international environmental governance in the context of the institutional framework on sustainable development as part of the Group's input into the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. The Group's work in this respect has been submitted as part of the preparatory process for the Conference.

## **V. Enhanced sustainability of policies, management practices and operations in the United Nations system**

### **A. Consultations on advancing the framework for environmental and social sustainability in the United Nations system**

32. At their sixteenth meeting, the senior officials welcomed the progress made in the consultative process on environmental and social safeguards, which was launched to assess possible conceptual frameworks that could provide a balanced approach to the challenge of cross-cutting environmental and social issues, flexibility and accountability, and expressed support for the continued development of options for a possible system-wide approach to environmental and social safeguards based on a review of existing policies and guidelines.

33. By its decision 26/11, the Governing Council encouraged the Group to continue advancing the sustainability of policies, management practices and operations in the United Nations system, and the establishment of an agreement to put in place a process for environmental impact assessment and the use of environmental and social safeguards in respect of projects taken up directly by the organizations of the United Nations system.

34. The consultative process continued in the form of a consultative group and a drafting group. A mapping exercise and inter-agency review of existing practices and policies pertaining to social and environmental performance in the United Nations system were undertaken. Given the variety of practices, emphasis was laid on experiences shared by early adopters of environmental and social assessment practices, such as the International Fund for Agricultural Development, UNDP, the World Bank and the World Health Organization. The results of the consultation took the form of a draft report, a joint statement and a framework for environmental and social sustainability in the United Nations system including safeguards as a possible instrument to be used, which were endorsed by the senior officials at their seventeenth meeting on the understanding that the statement would be revised and annexed to the present report. The statement and framework are set out in the annex to the present report, without formal editing.

35. The senior officials requested the Chair of the Environment Management Group:

(a) To inform the Secretary-General of the initiative, to invite him to provide a foreword to the report and to submit the report as part of the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development;

(b) To bring the issue, through the appropriate channels, to the attention of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination at its meeting in 2012.

36. They also agreed to continue the consultative process on environmental and social sustainability for another year in order to support the implementation of the statement, and:

(a) Further to develop a community of good practice or resource centre to share knowledge and lessons learned;

(b) Further to coordinate with the issue management group on environmental sustainability management to ensure synergies;

(c) To explore options for issues under consideration, such as a common support and knowledge-sharing function; accountability; and identification of ways to go beyond managing risks and benefits and also “do good”;

(d) To identify options to ensure comparable social expertise to complement the environmental competence of Environment Management Group members.

37. The Group’s work in this respect has been submitted as part of the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

### **B. Issue management group on environmental sustainability management**

38. Recalling that the issue management groups on climate neutrality and on sustainable procurement had been merged into a group on sustainability management with a mandate until the end of 2012, the senior officials in 2010 requested the group to prepare by September 2011 a strategic plan for sustainability management in the United Nations system in view of the need to anchor sustainability in the system’s internal management and operational structures.

39. By its decision 26/11, the Governing Council encouraged the Environment Management Group to continue supporting the implementation of the United Nations climate-neutral strategy and

advancing the sustainability of policies, management practices and operations in the United Nations system, including sustainable procurement.

40. The second common greenhouse gas inventory for the United Nations system was released at the meeting of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination held in Nairobi in April 2011. It included the emissions inventories of 52 United Nations organizations, described their emission reduction efforts to date and provided a summary snapshot of draft emissions reduction strategies that United Nations organizations were preparing to reduce their environmental footprints. The latest data illustrate that the United Nations system in 2009 accounted for a footprint of 1.7 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalent.

41. An improved system for reporting greenhouse-gas emissions has been tested with valuable support from the United Nations Department of Field Support and the International Civil Aviation Organization. In line with the recommendations of the Environment Management Group's strategy for a climate-neutral United Nations, and the specific request in this regard formulated by the Chief Executives Board (CEB/2007/2), the group developed a recommended approach for voluntary offsetting of greenhouse-gas emissions for United Nations organizations by Environment Management Group members. All United Nations organizations represented in the issue management group have been preparing specific emission reduction strategies with defined targets and timelines for particular activities. A help-desk service has been maintained by the Sustainable United Nations facility to provide issue management group members with training and tailored advice on inventories, emissions reduction strategies and other issues relevant to the implementation of the climate-neutral strategy.

42. Official travel of staff, meeting participants, experts and others contribute to approximately half the total climate footprint of the United Nations system. In 2011, two studies aimed at identifying options for streamlining United Nations travel policies and practices to reduce related emissions and budgets were finalized. The first related to United Nations travel policies and the second, drafted in collaboration with the United Nations information and communications technology network, focused on the opportunities offered by electronic communications as a tool to reduce the need to travel and to make more efficient use of existing technologies and staff time.

43. Greenhouse-gas emissions from buildings also account for much of the United Nations climate footprint as a result of the Organization's presence in over 500 locations. A working group on sustainable facilities management, supported by the Sustainable United Nations facility, was established within the Inter-Agency Network of Facilities Managers in March 2010 to tackle some of these issues.

44. A support package to assist United Nations agencies with sustainable procurement has been concluded, with 10 product-specific guidelines on sustainable procurement, a "Buying for a Better World" guide and an online training module produced as a collaborative effort between UNEP, the United Nations Office for Project Services, the International Labour Organization and the Procurement Network. In response to a specific request made by the senior officials at their sixteenth meeting, a communications strategy on sustainable procurement has been developed in collaboration with the Procurement Network working group on sustainable procurement. Furthermore, the Procurement Network included sustainable procurement among its five strategic priorities and thus in the standing elements of its workplan. The issue of sustainable procurement in the United Nations was further discussed by the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session, in September 2010, leading to the decision that the issue merited further attention by the Committee before its consideration by the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session.

45. A proposal for a strategic plan for sustainability management in the United Nations system was developed in response to the specific request made by the senior officials at their sixteenth meeting. Launched in June 2010, the "Greening the Blue" platform has become a widely respected communications and knowledge-sharing tool within the United Nations system and beyond. Links with networks of the High-Level Committee on Management and other common United Nations networks for facilities management, travel, procurement, communications and information and communication technologies have been nurtured by their involvement in relevant issue management group publications, methodologies and activities. Consequently, some networks are reaching out to one another to maximize synergies focused on efficiencies and emission reductions in United Nations buildings.

46. At their seventeenth meeting, the senior officials welcomed the efforts made in United Nations organizations to reduce emissions within the limited resources available. They renamed the issue management group the "issue management group on environmental sustainability management". They also welcomed and approved a recommended approach for voluntary offsetting of greenhouse-gas

emissions by Group members entitled “carbon credits – recommendations for selection and procurement”.

47. They also approved a strategic plan for sustainability management in the United Nations system, intended to move it towards a consistent, systematic and cost-effective approach to sustainability management, and acknowledged the importance of providing common system-wide support for the implementation of the strategic plan, on the understanding that the funding options presented were indicative and would be subject to further consideration. They requested the secretariat to identify possible options for a common structure to support the implementation of the strategic plan and for resourcing the structure’s operation.

48. They requested the Chair to inform the Secretary-General and the Chief Executives Board about the strategic plan to support the establishment of sustainability management systems in all United Nations organizations.

49. In line with the strategic plan and drawing on existing work, the senior officials committed themselves to moving towards the introduction of organization-specific sustainability management systems and to endeavouring to identify appropriate resources for implementation. They requested the issue management group:

(a) To contribute to the preparation of the third edition of the report “Moving Towards a Climate Neutral UN”, to be released at the meeting of the Chief Executives Board in April 2012;

(b) To provide input as Environment Management Group contributions to the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development by 1 November 2011 as part of efforts to advance environmental and social sustainability in the United Nations system;

(c) To continue sharing knowledge, communication, training and awareness-raising activities, in particular based on the “Greening the Blue” platform, on issues such as sustainable buildings, procurement, sustainable events, travel and e-communications, and to maintain the links created with related inter-agency networks;

(d) To identify resources and possible partnerships to develop a tutorial for the United Nations system aimed at enhancing a culture of sustainability and enabling staff in their respective categories to contribute to the success of emissions reduction strategies and sustainability management;

(e) To undertake other activities as might be needed and possible within existing resources, to maintain the momentum of the United Nations climate-neutral and overall sustainability effort.

## Annex

### **Joint statement by executive heads of Environment Management Group members on advancing environmental and social sustainability in the United Nations system**

*We, the Executive Heads of Agencies, Funds, Programmes and Departments, of the United Nations,*

*Are convinced* that the promotion of human well-being and global sustainability hinges on environmental protection and social and economic development,

*Bear in mind* the responsibility of the United Nations system to embody the internationally accepted environmental and social principles in its internal management as well as to support their application by partners and stakeholders; and the need to reduce risks and unintended negative impacts, and maximize benefits to people and their environment in a coherent and integrated way within the UN system,

*Are conscious* of the efforts by those United Nations system entities that have already developed environmental and social safeguards to mitigate the environmental and social impacts and risks of their activities before the adoption of a common approach to advancing environmental and social sustainability in the United Nations system,

*Are mindful* of the need for the UN system to internalize the internationally agreed norms of the sustainability agenda at the level of policy/strategy, programme/project, and facilities/operations management through a common framework for environmental and social sustainability, including through safeguards, risk management, institutional learning, capacity-building, simplification, coherence, and transparency,

*Are recognizing* the wealth of experience across the UN system to ensure the environmental and social impacts and risks of activities are well managed, which has informed the development and adoption of this common approach,

We hereby commit ourselves, proceeding in a phased manner, to use the Framework for Advancing the Environmental and Social Sustainability in the UN System annexed to this statement as a means of furthering the organization's sustainability performance, including by:

(a) Moving our respective organizations towards strengthening environmental and social sustainability in our activities, and to endeavour to find the necessary resources to realize the increased efficiency and operational safety gains of such a common approach; and

(b) Supporting the further development and implementation of a UN system-wide framework for environmental and social sustainability including environmental and social safeguards; for monitoring collective efforts; and for reporting back to the Governing Bodies of our respective organizations on progress made, good practice, and lessons learned.

We make this commitment with a view to show leadership by increasing institutional accountability for the environmental and social sustainability of our activities. We do this to further enable the UN system to work smarter and safer, respond more effectively to emerging issues and stakeholder needs, and better harness lessons from shared experience.

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| <p><i>Annex to joint statement by Executive Heads of EMG Members</i></p> <p><b>A Framework for Advancing the Environmental and Social Sustainability in the UN System</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |  |
| <b>Vision</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |  |
| <p>The environmental and social sustainability of the UN is enhanced, thereby contributing to its mission to promote and protect human well-being in line with internationally agreed declarations, conventions, standards and covenants.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |  |
| <b>Rationale</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |  |
| <p>The UN system has a long history of promoting positive environmental and social outcomes. While many parts of the organization have individually internalized sustainability goals, the UN acting as One can do even more.</p> <p>By developing of a common environmental and social sustainability framework, the UN will strengthen its leadership role and better support Member States to further the global sustainability agenda at all levels. Specifically, the framework allows the organization to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Lead by example:</b> by enhancing institutional capabilities and credibility through strengthening the internalization of the environmental and social principles it advocates, thereby contributing more effectively to the achievement of internationally agreed goals and targets related to sustainability;</li> <li>- <b>Work safer and smarter:</b> by reducing risks and maximizing benefits through an integrated approach to informed decision-making;</li> <li>- <b>Respond more effectively:</b> by better addressing emerging issues and stakeholder needs in a timely manner, and by being an attractive and trusted implementing partner;</li> <li>- <b>Leverage knowledge and experience:</b> by improved information sharing and working in a more efficient, coherent, accountable and transparent manner.</li> </ul> |  |
| <b>Objective</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |  |
| <p>The UN system enhances its sustainability by internalizing internationally accepted environmental and social principles at the three entry points of policy/ strategy, programmes/ projects and facilities/ operations through individual and collective approaches that address associated risks and maximize opportunities.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |  |

| Expected outcomes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Outputs for individual entities                                                                                                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>1. Enabling Conditions</b><br/>Enabling conditions are strengthened and established for the internalization of internationally accepted environmental and social principles within UN entities.</p>                                                                     | a) A clear, coherent vision and policy is established that relates environment and social issues to the mission and work of the organization.                               |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | b) Internal capacities to implement the vision and policy, and raise awareness among staff to ensure environmental and social sustainability is embraced.                   |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | c) Adequate resources are available to achieve the institutional goals of the vision and policy.                                                                            |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | d) A continuous cycle of improvement by reviewing the effectiveness of outcomes and activities in order to enhance the organization's environmental and social performance. |
| <p><b>2. Implementation entry-points</b><br/>Environmental and social considerations are systematically integrated into service delivery mechanisms to achieve desired results, using the following three management entry-points to encompass the work of the UN system:</p> |                                                                                                                                                                             |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b><i>Policy / Strategy</i></b></p> <p>UN system supports the development of policies and strategies that embed a broad view of sustainability and avoid unnecessary trade-offs or harm to people and the environment.</p>                                                                                     | <p>a) A process for integrating environmental and social sustainability considerations into relevant policies and strategies is implemented, for example through conducting or supporting strategic level assessment.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <p><b><i>Programmes / Projects</i></b></p> <p>Environmental and social considerations are systematically integrated in all programme and project cycles including, for example, through the use of environmental and social assessment.</p>                                                                       | <p>a) An environmental and social assessment framework (including safeguards) is developed and implemented that includes screening, review, management plans, monitoring, accountability and transparency.</p> <p>b) The consideration of environmental and social performance objectives is integrated into existing management approaches, such as partnerships and networks.</p>                                                                                  |
| <p><b><i>Facilities / Operations</i></b></p> <p>Procedures and practices for integrating environmental and social considerations into management practices and support systems for operations, premises, travel, procurement, and use of information technology which contributes to sustainable development.</p> | <p>a) A sustainability management system is established which encompasses measures for moving the UN entity towards climate neutrality.</p> <p>b) Sustainable practices in building management, procurement and information and communication technologies are developed.</p> <p>c) Sustainable practices to address areas not covered by the Sustainability Management strategy, such as social aspects of facilities and operations management, are developed.</p> |

#### **Collective Actions**

1. Demonstrate *system-wide commitment* for the advancement of environmental and social sustainability of the UN system through support for a common approach to the use of environmental and social sustainability measures as outlined in the proposed framework.
2. Adopt *minimum requirements* for the internalization of environmental and social sustainability measures across the three entry-points.
3. Keep the advancement of the use of environmental and social sustainability measures under review and continue *the sharing of knowledge and lessons learned* among UN entities to strengthen coherence and leverage efficiencies.
4. Consider the need for a support and knowledge sharing function to assist UN organizations to: 1) internalize enhancement of their environmental and social sustainability measures, 2) build capacity and share learning; 3) centralize accountability, reporting and evaluation.