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UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

THE CLEARING-HOUSE EXPERIMENT

Note by the secretariat

This paper was originally prepared for discussion at a meeting with representatives of institutions of bilateral and multilateral assistance programmes, held in Geneva on 7 July 1983. It is being reproduced as background information for the present meeting.

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The Clearing House Experiment

The United Nations Environment Programme "UNEP", has been asked by its Governing Council to experiment with mechanisms which would facilitate donor assistance to developing countries in areas related to the environment. Some of these mechanisms were briefly described in Executive Director Tolba's 16 May 1983 letter to heads of donor agencies. This paper is intended to provide a somewhat more detailed description of each programme.

The letter of 16 May 1983 described three types of activities which we will designate in this paper as Type A, Type B, and Type C.

The Type A programme covers relatively small project efforts where a developing country seeks technical help such as consultants, training grants or small amounts of equipment. UNEP is fleshing out these small project ideas with just enough detail to give a potential donor a basis for deciding whether or not it wishes to explore the project directly with the developing country.

The Type B programme covers a few sector-wide multidisciplinary programmes for tackling serious environmental problems. Once a programme is articulated and projects identified, donors will be invited to consider them with a view to identifying those which they would wish to finance wholly or partially and hence enter into detailed project development efforts.

The Type C programme has to do with the improvement of the integration of environmental considerations in the development planning processes of a developing country on a comprehensive basis.

In addition to these three types of activities, the Type D programme covers south-south activities in which one developing country proffers assistance to another.

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Clearing House Projects

Type A - Small Project Activities

Over the past several years the General Assembly and the United Nations Environment Programme Governing Council have requested Governments and the Executive Director to find ways to increase funding for environment related projects. One approach UNEP is taking is to become a broker between developing countries and donors interested in helping on environmental matters. Two donors, the Netherlands and the Federal Republic of Germany, have set aside funds to be used for small project activities and have signed general agreements with UNEP covering their participation.

These two donors have indicated an interest in receiving from UNEP project identification documents describing modest efforts, sometimes called "manageable projects". By way of illustration, if a government wishes to improve its environmental machinery by training one or two staff members in particular environmentally related areas, or by bringing in one or two consultants for a short period, (perhaps with small amounts of equipment) this would be an appropriate channel for seeking such assistance. In this case, UNEP ascertains that the developing country gives the proposed activity a high priority and that it is appropriately cleared with the aid co-ordinating body in the government. A form is filled out describing the project, giving general estimates of costs and designating the focal point within the developing country where the potential donor might go in order to make specific arrangements. It is understood that UNEP's function is that of a broker and that, in most cases, once an identified project has been picked up for bilateral negotiation or further programming activity by a donor, UNEP's role will be basically to follow up in order to ascertain what action may have been taken.

This programme, which is still in its infancy, has started with the decision by the Netherlands government to finance three activities which have been suggested to them.

The first three activities picked up by the Netherlands are: a programme of training developed by UNEP's International Registry for Potentially Toxic Chemicals (IRPTC) which will upgrade national capacity in a number of developing countries to deal with dangerous chemicals; a programme in Burundi related to afforestation, wildlife and national park development; and a programme in Egypt related to environment and industrial development.

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Because UNEP has found it necessary to do some staff work on each proposal before presenting it to potential donors, the Federal Republic of Germany offered to help UNEP by providing a consultant, at its own expense, for at least 6 months to assist in the review of correspondence and for dealing with Governments, through Resident Representatives of the United Nations, in order to flesh out programmes which often come to UNEP with less information than is needed by a potential donor.

While the Netherlands and the Federal Republic of Germany have made specific funding set-asides for financing Type A programmes under the Clearing House, UNEP is also approaching other donors with these small project ideas with the hope that a number of donors will wish to provide such assistance even if on an ad hoc basis. UNEP will make an attempt to learn more about various funding facilities which might be utilized for the occasional training grant, short-term consultants or small amounts of equipment.

UNEP hopes to "harden" about 30 Type A projects to be brokered at any time in the initial phase. More than 100 potential projects were identified. Some of these proved to be old ideas which are no longer applicable; the rest required further work by UNEP to make them acceptable for consideration by potential donors.

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Clearing House Projects

Type B - Sector Programmes for Serious Environmental Problems

On examining the three Governing Council decisions related to the Clearing House type of facility, it became clear that a second component looking at larger and longer term "serious environmental problem areas" was required. Initial planning in this area is financed by the Government of Sweden.

Under this programme we are dealing with problems of such a scope that we know in advance the effort needed to deal with them will continue at least for several decades. Solutions to problems are not self evident. In a search for an ever improving policy, administrative and technical strategy the developing country involved recognizes the need to look at the problem from a multidisciplinary point of view, considering every factor which must be addressed to achieve sustainable, environmentally sound development in the sector addressed. UNEP will organize technical teams to work with government teams to spell out a sector strategy approach. In addition to articulation of a strategy, specific proposals will be made for change in administrative arrangements, development of institutions and implementation of projects. Out of this process both technical assistance and larger projects will be identified suitable for implementation with the help of regular donors.

The experimental thesis being tested is that good planning will lead to more effective, environmentally sound development activity attracting priority for funding from major donors.

Over the past year, UNEP has undertaken a selection process to choose four environmental problems of a serious nature in four countries. First, a meeting in December 1982 attended by high-level experts from representative parts of the world met in Nairobi and reduced the number of potential countries to 12. Then in the early months of 1983 high level teams visited the 12 countries, reporting to the Executive Director in meetings held in early May. Four countries were selected. They are Peru, Indonesia, Botswana and Jordan. The next step is to articulate a scope of work for the multidisciplinary technical teams to go to the four countries in the Fall of 1983.

In Peru, the serious environmental problem has to do with the development projects in the selva area. The Government has become increasingly concerned about the long term environmental factors. The rapid development of the area, and the transfer of population through resettlement make action all the more urgent.

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The intention is therefore to design a programme for the integrated environmental management of rural development projects being carried out in the region. This programme would emphasise watersheds, forests, soils, resource management, and the sustainable use of the tropical ecosystem.

In Indonesia the most serious environmental problem has to do with the development taking place in the so called "critical lands". Large population resettlement in the fragile tropical ecosystem is leading to a serious process of overall ecosystem deterioration.

The intention is to develop an integrated strategy for these areas, exemplifying environmentally sound development in the humid tropics. The programme would emphasize soil, water and forest conservation and management.

In Botswana the most serious environmental problem has to do with water, which is not available near population centers. This problem is compounded by the general aridity of the region and recurrent droughts which are inducing a process of soil deterioration and desertification.

The proposal is to carry out a comprehensive integrated approach to water and soil conservation and management essential to ensure the sustainable development of Botswana. The programme would emphasize identification and management of water resources, control of soil erosion, rangeland, stock and wildlife management.

In Jordan the most serious environmental problem has to do with the arid zones where rainfall is scarce and a process of desertification has set in. The intention is to formulate a regional strategy in which particular emphasis will be placed on finding a way to persuade people to organize themselves to control grazing in such a way that forage production will increase while at the same time soil loss will be controlled.

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Clearing House Projects

Type C - Comprehensive Programmes for Integration of Environmental Considerations in Development Planning

The Type C Clearing House programme is intended to help governments to take an overall look at their development planning processes and machinery and then develop a programme for comprehensive development of capacity to integrate environmental considerations in the developing planning processes. One country, Papua New Guinea, has been selected for this effort.

UNEP, the World Wildlife Fund and the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) worked together in the development of the World Conservation Strategy. Once developed, attention was given to individual country conservation strategies. UNEP is interested in complementing the efforts of others by helping develop environmental planning capacity, initially in only one country.

Two high level consultants were attached to the visits to the twelve countries where the Type B programmes were selected. These consultants were looking for one country which would be a good place to work in a comprehensive way in the development of a Type C programme.

Papua New Guinea was selected in part because this is one country where the development process is at a very early stage so that there is an opportunity to avoid the kinds of mistakes made by many others. Papua New Guinea, several years ago, in adopting its constitution, included a provision which requires government to preserve the environment. Thus the circumstances are particularly interesting for a comprehensive effort.

In July 1983, a small team will visit Papua New Guinea to agree on a scope of work for a more comprehensive look at what needs to be done. A multidisciplinary team will go to Papua New Guinea in the Fall and out of their effort we expect to develop a number of modest programmes which donors might finance to provide training, consultant services and whatever else may be needed in order to build governmental capacity to analyse environmental problems in connection with the country's development programme.

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Clearing House Projects

Type D - South-South Assistance in Environmental Areas

Many members of the Governing Council have expressed an interest in increasing the flow of assistance among developing countries. Argentina has made available a million dollars over a five year period to provide Argentine assistance to other countries. This is the first formal effort through UNEP in this area.

During the coming months UNEP will be holding more detailed discussions with the Argentine government to discuss the most appropriate means of using this source in a brokering process comparable to the process used for Type A projects.

In addition UNEP, is also endeavouring to gather data from other developing countries as to their capacity to exchange technical assistance support. Governments have been requested to supply information as to the capacity of their country in specific environmental areas as well as to supply the names of institutions or individuals which could assist or co-operate with other developing countries.