

UK Strategic Priorities on United Nations Environment Programme (2003-2007)

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

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UK STRATEGIC PRIORITIES ON UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (2003-2007)

1. This paper sets out UK views on strategic priorities relating to UN Environment Programme (UNEP) activities in the period 2003-2007. These centre on UNEP's core environmental mandate and contribution towards following up the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), as well as encompassing governance and funding reforms that would enable it to function more effectively.

2. The priorities are founded in our strong commitment to supporting the role of the UN and multilateral processes in the field of international environmental and sustainable development policy. More particularly, the UK supports UNEP as the principal strategic global environmental authority serving as the focal point for environmental action and co-ordination within the UN system, including its role in promoting the environmental dimension of sustainable development. This is essential for the wider international effort to overcome the destabilising impacts of poverty and environmental degradation.

A Sectoral and Thematic Priorities

3. In the UK's view, UNEP can best focus its resources on activities that facilitate the practical implementation of environmental and sustainable development priorities, bearing in mind that it is a normative rather than operational body. That means discharging its core strategic environmental mandate, particularly on monitoring and assessment; and pursuing those elements of WSSD's Johannesburg Plan of Implementation where it has the skills and expertise to give real impetus to delivery. There may be scope for UNEP to scale down some peripheral activities, as well as to achieve intended outcomes through co-ordinating with other organisations, such as specialised MEAs in the wider UNEP family. UK sectoral and thematic priorities for the next four years are:

- **Environmental monitoring, assessment and early warning** (which links with raising awareness of environmental issues). Main outputs will include the GEO process, establishment of UNEP.Net, the global marine assessment and wider capacity building efforts. The UK will seek to ensure that proposals to strengthen UNEP's scientific base, including through the possible establishment of an international panel on global environmental change (IPEC), are consistent with UNEP's mandate and add value to work being done by bodies such as the IPCC, CSD and specialised MEAs.
- The **World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC)** as a **biodiversity** data and information centre has the potential to help fill the gaps in establishing global and regional biodiversity status and could play a key role in tracking progress toward the 2010 WSSD biodiversity target - in support of the CBD as the policy body. (Note: the UK also supports less strategic UNEP activities related to biodiversity, such as the Great Apes project and work on coral reefs.)
- **A leading role in achieving the global chemicals target agreed at WSSD.** The next two years will be critical with development of the new Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management by early 2006. Continuing work on **POPs, PIC, lead and mercury** is also very important.

- **Development of the Marrakech process on the 10 year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production (SCP)**, as task manager in co-operation with UN/DESA, OECD and other relevant bodies. This will continue to be a very significant work stream throughout the next four years, including for SCP aspects of CSD 2006-2007, focused on the broad thematic cluster of energy, climate change, industrial development and air pollution: UNEP's work on clean production will be particularly relevant.
- **Promotion and integration of the environmental dimension of the MDG on drinking water and the WSSD target on sanitation**, with a focus on CSD's 2004-2005 work cycle on water, sanitation and human settlements. UNEP's role concerns water assessments and monitoring, changing unsustainable water production, supply and consumption patterns, including the promotion of integrated water resource management, encompassing freshwater, coastal zone and environmental wastewater (sewage) management. This to be pursued through the World Water Assessment Programme, Integrated Coastal Areas and River Basin Management, the Washington GPA and the Regional Seas Initiative. Continued close co-operation with other international bodies (such as HABITAT, WHO, UNDP) and national governments (particularly in developing countries) will be important. The issue will, of course, be the focus of Ministerial attention at the Jeju Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum in March 2004.
- The work undertaken by UNEP's **Post Conflict Assessment Unit (PCAU)** can bring real benefit to countries, such as Afghanistan and Iraq, whose environment has been damaged as a direct or indirect result of conflict, helping identify remedial action to address environmental challenges and building capacity to ensure that environmental issues are integrated into reconstruction and development. (However, this unusually high profile work stream can best continue to be funded through earmarked Trust Funds, rather than the Environment Fund, since the PCAU has been successful in attracting crisis donations so far.)
- **Capacity building for regional and national environmental governance, particularly in Africa**, in accordance with the sectoral priorities identified in the region, and in the **EECCA** countries, through Kiev follow-up focused on biodiversity, waste, chemicals and SCP. UNEP's strategic partnership with the GEF links with such work.

4. These front-line policy priorities are supported by governance priorities for UNEP itself and its functioning in the wider UN system.

B UNEP Governance and Finance

5. UNEP needs to be strengthened through a shift to adequate, predictable and equitable funding, with a wider base of contributors, which will enable it to plan and deliver its work programme efficiently and effectively. This will be assisted by continued efforts to build closer links with countries outside its traditional core of supporters, for example through its work with the NEPAD and the EECCA countries. Priorities related to UNEP governance and funding are:

- **Implementation of an indicative scale of contributions (ISC)** for countries' contributions to the main Environment Fund, with UK contributions to match or exceed indicated figures, subject to normal budgetary processes.
- **UNGA agreement to increasing the share of the UN Regular Budget to be allocated to UNEP and UNON** further to UNGA resolutions 56/253, 57/251 and 57/292.
- **Universal membership of the GC/GMEF**: this can extend member state engagement and increase UNEP's political authority.
- **UN Environment Organisation (UNEO)**: the UK can see a case for UNEP becoming a UN specialised agency or UNEO funded through mandatory contributions, but considers that further study is needed of the potential advantages and disadvantages. The UK has therefore agreed to participate in the intergovernmental working group on the topic initiated by France.
- **UNEP promotion of closer working between related MEAs** at HQ and regional level, particularly in the chemicals and biodiversity sectors.
- **UNEP participation in partnerships** with civil society and business, relevant to identified priority objectives; and **enhanced participation of civil society** in the work of UNEP and the GC, in line with Rio Principle 10 and the mandate given at the Cartagena GC/GMEF.
- **UNEP needs to prepare its budget and work programme for biennium 2006-2007 in close consultation with the CPR**, in accordance with the new procedures agreed by them in 2003. It is important to ensure proper but proportionate scrutiny in preparation for GC23 in February 2005.

C UN Governance and Inter-Agency Co-operation

6. The UK attaches high priority to co-operative working between different organisations within the UN system, as well with the IFIs. This is particularly important for UNEP, given the cross-cutting relevance of the environmental dimension of sustainable development, including for the UN system's collective effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and implement the WSSD outcomes. Enhanced co-operation and co-ordination between UNEP and other UN bodies such as UN/DESA and UNDP will assist policy implementation. This needs to be a two-way street and the UK will continue to make the case to all relevant bodies accordingly. UK priorities are:

- At strategic level: **UNEP needs to play its full part in co-ordinating mechanisms including the UNDG, CEB and its sub-committees.**
- At international sectoral level: **UNEP co-operation with UN/DESA, UNDP and other relevant organisations in pursuit of agreed priorities** (building on good examples such last year's joint organising with UN/DESA of the Marrakech workshop on SCP and the London Meeting with UNDP and UNEP/WCMC on monitoring of progress towards the WSSD biodiversity target).

- At regional level: **UNEP co-ordination with GEF, UNDP, World Bank and other relevant organisations on capacity building** in support of regional and country-level delivery of agreed objectives.
- **Subject to further discussion with UN/DESA and UNDP, UNEP to provide input to further development of the UNDP country report system** to enable effective reporting on delivery against the MDGs and WSSD goals in developing countries.

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