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

**Twenty-sixth session of the Governing Council/
Global Ministerial Environment Forum**
Nairobi, 21–24 February 2011

**Ministerial consultations of the twenty-sixth session of the Governing
Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum of the United Nations
Environment Programme**

President's summary

The annex to the present note sets out a summary by the President of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum of the ministerial consultations held during the session. The summary is presented as submitted, without formal editing.

Annex

President's summary of the discussions by ministers and other heads of delegations at the 26th Session of the UNEP GC/GMEF

1. The UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC/GMEF) is the United Nations high-level environment policy forum and brings the world's environment ministers together to "review important and emerging policy issues in the field of the environment".
2. The GC/GMEF provides broad policy advice and guidance with the aim, among others, of promoting international cooperation in the field of the environment.
3. The twenty-sixth session of the Council/Forum convened from 21-24 February 2011 in Nairobi. During the high-level segment of the session delegates from 132 countries, including 56 ministerial level delegates, and 113 representatives of major groups and stakeholders, 22 United Nations organisations 11 intergovernmental organisations considered two separate topics under the overarching theme of "Contribution of UNEP to the preparatory process of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD)". Under this overarching theme, two specific sub-themes related to the UNCSD were addressed. The two themes were:
 - I. 'Green Economy: benefits, opportunities and challenges of a green economy transition'
 - II. 'International Environmental Governance'
4. In addition a Ministerial Lunch Roundtable on UNEP and the nineteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-19) and its five themes (transport, mining, chemicals, waste, and the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production) was also convened, further contributing to the overall ministerial deliberations.
5. The consultations were informed by one information document and four thought-provoking background papers prepared as briefings for the participants, as well as the outcome of the 12th Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum.
6. This President's summary identifies some of the main challenges and opportunities that were discussed by ministers and other heads of delegations with respect to the green economy and international environmental governance, together with messages to the world's governments the United Nations' system, civil society and the private sector, as they prepare for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.
7. The President's summary is a reflection of the interactive dialogue that occurred between the ministers and other heads of delegations attending the twenty-sixth session of the Council/Forum. It reflects the ideas presented and discussed rather than a consensus view of participants.

Overarching Theme: Contribution of UNEP to the preparatory process of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

8. Discussion by the ministers and other heads of delegations revolved around three key points: a) setting the key ambitions and expected outcomes from United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development including its preparatory process; b) a green economy, its perceived risks, expected benefits and enabling conditions for its success; and c) international environmental governance reform. Key challenges, risks and opportunities were presented and discussed by session panelists and participants.

Messages to the Preparatory Process for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

‘It is essential to renew our political commitment on the engagements and principles set out in Rio in 1992’

9. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development should be inclusive and ensure the widest possible and most diverse participation and contributions. Stakeholders’ inclusion and active engagement should be a key principle in the conference preparation and organization.

10. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development needs to produce an assessment and stocktaking as to why many of the commitments of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio, 1992 as well as the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, 2002, were not realized to their full potential. What has prevented us from moving forward on our agreements and how can we re-energize the political will to avoid the perception that multilateral approaches are increasingly associated with indecision or stalemate?

11. Inter – agency collaboration within the UN system, such as through the Environment Management Group, is being concretely and actively pursued as a strategic element in UNEP’s preparatory activities and contributions towards the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. This should be emphasized in all preparatory processes.

‘...sustainable development forms the core of the contemporary world’

12. Green economy should not be viewed as a substitute for sustainable development, but rather an instrument to accelerate economic development; contribute to poverty eradication; and overcome increasing vulnerability related to climate change, reduced access to water resources and food stocks -- thus meeting the specific needs of countries. In this respect, we should address the concerns of developing countries in providing accessible and readily available answers to the basic needs of an ever growing population.

13. On international environmental governance, the challenge for the UNEP Governing Council is about moving the conversation beyond the common diagnosis of the problem and beginning to articulate a forward-looking consensus on reform objectives, with the identification of the alternative scenarios that need to be elaborated and ultimately negotiated in the run up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. Further, the challenge is to develop the main options for reform that have so far emerged into mature options.

‘There’s a need for new political commitment and leadership - and ministers can help forge it’.

14. Convergence between the perspectives of developing and developed economies should be actively pursued in the conference preparation. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development should deliver a renewed legacy, which moves from unsustainable production and consumption patterns to sustainable solutions applicable to both developed and developing economies.

15. There are different views on the green economy concept and instruments. We should aim at achieving a common understanding of green economy.

16. UNEP’s governing council should help articulate a forward-looking consensus on international environmental governance reform objectives, with the identification of alternative options that need to be elaborated and ultimately negotiated at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio, 2012.

17. The outcome of sixteenth session of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Cancun, 29 November -11 December 2010, provided not only a fundamental step in the consolidation of a long-term climate regime, but also reaffirms and provides a fresh example of renewed political commitment to international cooperation; a cooperation in which synergies and collaboration among the United Nations System, together with all stakeholders can reach consensus on emerging issues.

Sub - Theme I: ‘Green Economy: benefits, opportunities and challenges of a green economy transition’

18. As governments approach the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the world faces numerous environmental challenges, such as water scarcity, ecosystem vulnerability and climate change. A consumptive economy can exacerbate these environmental risks while also failing to deliver social equity. In this regard, when considering the cost of achieving a green economy, measuring the cost of inaction is useful in placing the cost of action into context.

19. Countries are confronted with growing scarcity and degradation of natural resources. Future economic growth will be conditioned on this reality and a green economy can help address this challenge. Likewise, poverty eradication is the key to a green economy transition given the direct link poverty has to resource degradation.

20. There are numerous success stories where a green economy transition is successfully taking place at the national level and countries can learn from the success of others. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge the different national contexts, and that each country may pursue its own pathway towards a green economy. Green economy and development are two sides of the same coin – one needs economic, environmental and social progress in order to have a green economy.

21. Elements that were mentioned as important in a transition towards a green economy included coordination, technology development and diffusion, technology transfer, capacity building, and additional financial resources, particularly in the case of developing countries. Social dialogue, including multistakeholder participation was also discussed as an important element. Education, communication and awareness raising - including for consumers and producers – are important for social change that is needed to achieve a green economy transition.

Challenges

22. Some countries indicated that they do not have a clear understanding of the concept of green economy. A common understanding of a green economy should be developed through partnerships between governments, international organizations, civil society, including major groups, such as women and youth, and the private sector. Sustainable consumption and production (including the 10-year Framework of Programmes) should be considered as a critical element supporting a transition to a green economy.

‘Need to move from protecting environment from business to using business to protect the environment’

23. A significant number of countries expressed their concerns about trade barriers and the implications for international trade need to be discussed in an honest and open manner. It is imperative that nations are not locked out of markets under the pretext of greening.

24. Participants noted that global markets can be harnessed for clean products, goods and services, and that the role of trade is key. The World Trade Organization has a role and procedures to deal with the relevant concerns. While developing countries are encouraged to adopt green economy strategies, many will hesitate if they feel they are being stopped from entering markets.

25. For technology transfer to be successful it should also include the transfer of know-how; without such a transfer in skills, there will be a certain dependency created which is risky because it fails to allow for true development. Uncertainty with respect to intellectual property rights still hangs over the issue of technology transfer and technical assistance. Understanding the difficulties in technology transfer and addressing them can help countries overcome risks and fears of protectionism.

26. Priority investments should be made in areas that foster natural capital and decouple consumption from economic growth. Public and private finance both play important roles in a green economy, though there are different views regarding their respective contributions.

27. Financing a transition to a green economy should also consider innovative financing mechanisms, including the potential establishment of new financing vehicles to spur investment and facilitate the transfer of technology.

28. Developing countries require support from developed countries in the transition to a green economy; the issue of financing to allow developing countries to leap-frog to a green economy is paramount and, in particular, investing capital in technology or infrastructure is often the underlying challenge.

Benefits and Opportunities

29. The green economy holds the promise of securing the livelihoods of millions of people, and can help countries leapfrog in patterns of sustainable consumption and production, cleaner technologies and infrastructure.

‘Next step should be not why, but how; not when, but now; not who, but all of us.’

30. The UNEP Green Economy Report provides a good source of information to inform further discussions on green economy.

31. Current economic indicators, including GDP, are insufficient to measure human well-being, and importantly, fail to value natural capital. It will not be possible to overcome the challenges associated with biodiversity loss without understanding their economic value.

32. Indicators are critical for measuring and tracking progress reliably. Useful lessons can also be learned from the private sector in measurement and reporting. In addition, green criteria need to be more effectively incorporated in investment decision-making and funding programmes.

33. Countries should consider developing green economy strategic plans or roadmaps that could be reviewed on an annual basis in order to reflect on successes, challenges and obstacles to the transition. Finally, there is a need for further data collection and assessment of the baseline in order to enable an effective evaluation/measurement of the progress towards a green economy. UNEP should contribute to this effort in collaboration with other international institutions.

34. Certain policies may require coordination at regional or international level, in order to avoid concerns about competitiveness which may constrain action by individual countries acting alone.

35. To build their capacity, key for developing countries remains the role of technical cooperation and partnerships with international involvement. They need and welcome international support from organisations such as UNEP.

Messages on a Green Economy

36. Green economy needs to be seen in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and as one of the means to achieve sustainable development. Countries should consider a common understanding outlining certain key principles and elements of a green economy; such as resource efficiency, cleaner technologies, low-carbon, less pollution, reduced environmental risks.

‘Time to work together to build best practices in green economy’

37. There is not one model of green economy for all countries. Each country may pursue its own green economy pathway, depending on national circumstances. A green economy will mean different things to different countries and how a country implements a green economy will depend on the specific natural resources and capacity of the country.

38. Partners have a role to play and should be involved in a social and multistakeholder dialogue on the green economy, including groups such as the science community, labour, consumer groups and minority groups. The private sector has already made good advances in for example areas such as cleaner production, and can support sharing of best practices between industry sectors and countries. Civil society and women in particular, will be critical in shaping and enabling green economy strategies and plans.

39. UNEP should continue to play an active role in developing and operationalizing the green economy concept and continuing to act as a facilitator for countries interested in moving towards a green economy. UNEP should also continue to play an active role in the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development process, building on its experience and the knowledge generated from its recent green economy report.

40. Finally, as governments approach the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development it is critical that they have a clear understanding of the concept and possible strategies for achieving a green economy transition in their own countries.

41. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development presents an opportunity to recommit to building economies that enhance social equity and human well being, while reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities.

Sub-theme II: ‘International environmental governance’

‘Today we have reached what is undoubtedly an important crossroad. We don’t have a choice with a population of approaching nine billion to carry on with business as usual.’

42. Participants highlighted the historical evolution of international environmental governance, considered form and function, and the strengthening of existing structures, as well as the different options contained in the Nairobi - Helsinki Outcome. They also considered the interaction between local, regional and international policies and structures and civil society.

43. The work of the Consultative Group of ministers and high-level representatives established under Governing Council decision SS.XI/1 was broadly welcomed and its outcome document – the Nairobi-Helsinki outcome - was considered an important input to the work of the preparatory committee of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012.

“We need to advance to an age that has learned to think at a planetary scale.”

44. Reform of international environmental governance is linked to, but not in competition with, the institutional framework for sustainable development. In fact, it is clear that if we want to achieve advancements in the implementation of sustainable development we have to raise environment to the level of the other pillars.

45. The current system of environmental governance needs urgent and real reform as opposed to cosmetic reform. Horizontal integration is needed at the international, regional and national levels.

46. Reform is also needed at the national level. Development will not be sustainable unless governments invest in science and innovation, enhance resilience and human capacity, take country ownership of domestic sustainable development, promote transparency and inclusiveness, and measure progress.

47. Financing for sustainable development needs to be linked to targeted outcomes and should be owned at the national level. In order to close the implementation gap, there is a need to strengthen the financial architecture, including by improving the coherence and flow of financial resources and accessibility to them.

48. International environmental governance provides a bridge between the green economy and the institutional framework for sustainable development, which are the two themes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

49. In addition to focusing on institutional reform there should be a focus on processes, i.e. the cooperation and coordination mechanisms between institutions.

50. Any reforms should be underpinned by consideration of equity, solidarity, fairness, environmental justice and poverty eradication. Participation and public accountability are essential to governance.

51. Identified options for institutional reforms need further analysis through a transparent and participatory process before they can be acted upon.

Challenges

“We need to take responsibility, make decisions and stop running in circles”

52. The environment pillar is the weakest pillar in the sustainable development agenda.

53. Environmental governance is determined by national priorities and the strength of the environmental and social pillars in the UN system reflects the priorities that governments have placed on these issues.

54. Weaknesses are not just experienced at the international level but equally at the national level, where structures exist but are not necessarily harmonized.

55. While many policies exist, their effective implementation is often hampered by lack of financing and capacity, particularly in developing countries. Access to sufficient funding remains a key component of helping developing countries in particular to address the challenge of achieving a coordinated approach to sustainable development.

56. Fora should be created that allow the discussion of cross-cutting issues, as environmental bodies currently act in silos.

57. Special attention should be given to the role of women in international environmental governance, both because of the extent to which women in poor communities are vulnerable to environmental change, and because of their role as custodians of natural resources such as water.

58. Development of a common understanding of the meaning of sustainable development governance is important.

Benefits and Opportunities

‘UNEP should convert itself into an institution that acts.’

59. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development is also the appropriate venue to consider broader and system-wide reforms of international environmental governance. The outcomes of the UNEP-led Consultative Group should certainly be an input into the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development process.

60. There is a desire to strengthen processes at the regional level for consideration of international environmental governance and the regional preparatory meetings for the United Nations Conference on

Sustainable Development represent an opportunity to enhance the consideration of the regional dimension of governance reform.

61. A One UN approach at the country level represents important opportunities for strengthened action at national level. Involvement of all agencies with an environmental mandate into the reform debate will increase ownership and effectiveness.

62. Local and regional authorities are critical in implementation of agreed national commitments and are accountable to national governments. Enhanced involvement can be considered as an element in international environmental governance reform inter alia by drawing on existing models from other international arenas.

63. A good example for improved interlinkages is the synergies process of the chemical and waste multilateral environmental agreements, which has also been translated to the national level. The process should be tailored towards different institutions and bodies.

64. Given that the traditional mechanisms for obtaining funding for environment are insufficient, there is an opportunity to rethink the manner in which fundraising is done for international environmental governance and how it can be further accessed.

65. Sustainable development is about people's lives and therefore civil society has a crucial role to play in the move towards sustainable development. They can help inform the international environmental governance reform process and help strengthen the long term ability of institutions to adapt to changing environmental and social circumstances.

66. Civil society participation, including business should reflect our modern age and be brought to standards of the 21st century.

Messages on International Environmental Governance

“We have to lay the structural foundations now for the future.”

67. Strengthening the environmental pillar, through a decision taken at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012, is important so that it is in balance with the social and economic pillars.

68. Strengthening UNEP alone may not be enough. The Nairobi-Helsinki Outcome provides options that can be considered to strengthen the environmental pillar. There were several options for broader reform proposed in the Nairobi-Helsinki Outcome,

- Enhancing UNEP;
- Establishing a new umbrella organisation for sustainable development;
- Establishing a specialised agency;
- Reforming the United Nations Economic and Social Council and Commission for Sustainable Development;
- Enhancing institutional reforms and streamlining existing structures.

The challenge is to develop a main option of reforms that have so far emerged into a mature option.

69. We should continue to make progress in the multilateral system. The implementation of the decisions adopted at the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Cancun were welcomed as a fundamental step in the consolidation of the long-term climate regime, and which confirmed the importance of multilateral negotiations. These decisions require participation from all stakeholders.

70. Some countries indicated that access to information and environmental justice is fundamental in decision-making today. The Aarhus Convention was mentioned in this context as an example.

71. For the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development to be successful we should have more clarity on the sustainable development framework and a better vision of what we want to achieve.

72. The efforts to strengthen international environmental governance should be about more than rationalization of fragmentation and seeking efficiencies. Instead it should be about re-envisioning and even dreaming about what is required institutionally for environment and sustainability and putting this in place.

73. A peer review approach was strongly expressed by some as an effective approach to measure implementation.

74. Environment ministers should commit to working at the national level, and with other ministers, to ensure that their voice is strong and included equally in the discussions on the institutional framework for sustainable development.

UNEP and the nineteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development

75. The ministerial lunch on UNEP's contribution to the nineteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development examined the themes of the current implementation cycle of the CSD (transport, chemicals, waste, mining and the 10 year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production) as they relate to UNEP's programme of work, and explored policy options for CSD 19, with a focus on the 10 year framework of programmes, favouring possible adoption at CSD 19 in May 2011.

76. UNEP was recognized for its contribution to the Marrakech Process and its role in supporting the development of a 10 year framework of programmes was underlined. UNEP was further requested to play an active role in the implementation of the 10 year framework of programmes in the future. The ministerial lunch further enriched the dialogue amongst the ministers and other heads of delegations and assisted in identifying ways for UNEP to continue supporting the sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development. A complete summary of the ministerial discussion and recommendations on the 10 year framework of programmes is appended.

Appendix I: Messages from the ministerial lunch on UNEP and the nineteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development

1. Challenges

While political commitment to sustainable consumption and production has steadily increased since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, actions have often been fragmented.

Effective decoupling of economic growth from resource use and environmental degradation is needed in order to secure better quality of life while minimizing resource use.

A major shift to sustainable consumption and production requires endorsement at the highest political level and a stronger commitment to work together through a common vision under an ambitious and well structured framework of action for SCP.

‘Time has come for action in support of SCP, and this requires a well structured framework including life cycle approach in the various sectors’

An effective, transformative change to sustainable consumption and production patterns requires formal and strengthened cooperation and coordination at global, regional and national level; and strategic channelling of resources.

2. Benefits and Opportunities

The 19th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development presents an opportunity to contribute in a significant way to sustainable development through the development of a strong and ambitious framework for action on sustainable consumption and production – the 10 year framework of programmes on SCP.

The two themes of Rio+20 are closely linked to the five themes at Commission on Sustainable Development that all contribute to sustainable development. ”A 10 YF, adopted at 19th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, will represent a critical contribution to Rio+20” and such “a 10YFP will be a strong bridge to RIO+20 and a key milestone in advancing green economy and sustainable development;”

In line with its mandate to enhance sustainability in the various programmes, UNEP has developed a broad experience and expertise in supporting the design, development and implementation of sustainable consumption and production approaches, practices and policies, working with a range of stakeholders and in close collaboration with other UN agencies such as UN World Tourism Organization, UNESCO and UNIDO in a variety of SCP-related areas. This includes co-hosting the secretariat of the Marrakech Process alongside UNDESA and cooperating with the Marrakech Process Task Forces in developing tools, methodologies and guidelines for specific areas of SCP.

All of these activities are relevant to the 10YFP, and its potential prioritized programmes could build upon this experience in areas such as sustainable tourism; agri-food; sustainable buildings and construction; sustainable public procurement; mainstreaming SCP into planning and development strategies; consumer information; education and awareness raising; waste management, transport and resource efficient and cleaner production.

3. Messages from the session on CSD-19

Progress has been different in the five sectors, but all have reached various good practices that could be replicated and scaled up. We should consolidate and scale up what has been achieved so far at global, regional and national level to promote that the programme on SCP reaches out to as many countries and partners as possible.

CSD 19 is the culmination of over seven years of consultation and international cooperation to advocate the importance and feasibility of SCP, notably through the Marrakech Process, and it is now time to advance, with the development and endorsement of the framework at CSD 19 in May 2011.

An ambitious 10YFP that goes beyond the status quo and will contribute in a meaningful way to achieving sustainable patterns of consumption and production in all countries is needed, and should be concluded at CSD-19.

This 10YFP should be based on a common vision deriving from Rio and JPOI, contributing to the MDGs and enhancing the poverty and environment nexus;

The 10 year framework of programmes should contain a common vision, and agreed goals and objectives, to steer programmes and related initiatives and activities under it. The 10 YFP could, building on experience of Marrakech Process and SAICM, be in 2 parts:

- a. Policy options (vision, function, institutional structure, criteria; and guidelines) for programmes programmes as an open list based on agreed criteria;
- b. A solid and efficient institutional structure that builds upon existing expertise and utilizes and optimizes existing structures at the local, national, regional and global levels while involving all relevant stakeholders at all levels could include:

Coordination mechanisms at all levels:

- High level international forum, allowing for engagement of all stakeholders; strategic decisions and reviewing progress
- Regional coordination, creation and/or strengthening of SCP centres of expertise, and engagement of existing regional fora, roundtables and networks on SCP in the regions
- National coordination, through national focal points and inter-ministerial task forces
- Local engagement, engage and empower cities as important actors to deliver sustainable development.

Supporting arrangements to the 10 YFP such as:

- An Interagency collaboration mechanism: to actively engage relevant UN agencies
- A Secretariat for support and coordination, hosted by one lead agency, based on proven experience and comparative advantage, ensuring quick delivery, efficiency and accountability
- A focus for resource mobilization through a dedicated trust fund for additional and new resources, including voluntary contributions, coupled with the reallocation of existing funds towards SCP

The 10 year framework should be flexible in order to be adaptable to different needs, contexts, priorities and capacities of developing as well as developed countries. Programmes should address cross-cutting themes which contribute to the enabling policy framework for SCP.

Initial programmes for the 10YFP could be identified, taking into account regional priorities, sectors or areas which have the most negative environmental impacts, and areas in which we can build on existing activities, such as the work of the Marrakech Process Task Forces. The 10YFP should be flexible enough to accommodate new programmes at a later stage, in particular in response to emerging issues.

“There should be no more dispersed efforts and we should build on current experience and expertise, such as the ones developed by UNEP”; the need for a stable and solid institutional structure, drawing lessons from the Marrakech Process, its regional achievements and task forces, calls for the active support of UNEP that should take the leading role in the implementation of the 10YFP.

If so required by the Commission on Sustainable Development, the United Nations Environment Programme should support the development and subsequent implementation of the 10 YFP, including through the coordination of its institutional arrangements, drawing on its accumulated experience, expertise and partnerships in supporting the development and implementation of SCP policies, guidelines, tools and methodologies and in coordinating similar institutional frameworks.

Appendix II: Rapporteurs' reports from the Green Economy Roundtables

to be added

Appendix III: Rapporteurs' reports from the International Environmental Governance Roundtables

to be added
