

Statement by
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On Strengthening the Environmental Activities
before the Working Group
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Mr. Co-Chairs;

At the outset, I would like to associate myself with the statement made by distinguished representative of Pakistan, in his capacity as chairman of Group of 77 and China, on "strengthening the environmental activities" in this Working Group on 18 January 2007.

My delegation shares the concerns that degradation of natural resources continue to pose a major threat to human life and the environment. I think all of us are in agreement that we need to create an appropriate environment at all levels for the activities leading to conservation and sustainable utilization of all natural resource and thus further protection of the environment.

In this framework, and in line with paragraph 169 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome, we recognize the need for more efficient environmental activities in the United Nations System. Here, I would like to make several points with regard to paragraph 169 of WSO and also in reaction to your questions as well as the comments made in the previous meeting.

There are several procedural and substantive questions that should be taken into account during our discussions in this Working Group on the ways and means to strengthen the environmental activities

There are so many decisions made by intergovernmental bodies which have not yet been achieved such as the Cartagena ministerial meeting, aimed at strengthening international environmental activities and governance. The Report of the HL Panel on system-wide coherence is before us, a part of which refers to environment, without any decision from an intergovernmental body in that regard. Paragraph 169 of the 2005 WSO stresses the need for more efficient environmental activities and the need to explore the possibility of a more coherent institutional framework, including a more integrated structure. The GA resolution 61/422 on "the Report of the Governing Council of UNEP" decided to

consider the question of universal membership of the UNEP Governing Council in its sixty-fourth session. It means 3 years from now. So, there are some processes in parallel and uncertainties while addressing the issues before us.

I think at this stage we need a plan with a time frame in order to gradually consider various aspects of strengthening environmental governance and activities, based on the previous agreements.

The second question is the ways and means to tackle the existing shortages and problems and how to expedite our collective efforts in this regard.

Generally speaking, in addressing the question of strengthening environmental activities, we will be in a wrong direction if we reach certain formula, as solutions, which will not remove the existing constraints and gaps.

There exist so many decisions with regard to ways and means to strengthen international environmental governance and activities, including the decision of the 7th special session of UNEP Governing Council, held in Cartagena in 2002, whose full implementation is still a source of concern. Bali strategic plan for technology support and capacity building, as one of the outcomes of that meeting, has had no sufficient fund to be materialized. No considerable results have been achieved with regard to the coordination of MEAs. Although there has been some improvement in increasing financial resources of UNEP, partly as a result of Indicative Scale of Contribution, predictability and adequacy of funds available to UNEP has remained unfulfilled. In addition, one of the most important achievements of UNEP in 2002, which was formulation of certain criteria for enhancing compliance with and enforcement of multilateral environmental agreements, is still on the paper due to lack of adequate support and program for action.

GEF as the biggest international fund for financing environmental projects as well as the other environmental funds still lack adequate resources as well as the required simplicity in their proceedings to support the growing number of the project proposals of the developing countries in the pipelines. Moreover, UNEP and GEF should implement fully the outcome of Cartagena Session in regard to the need for an increased cooperation between the two bodies in financing and implementing projects in developing countries. There are no adequate predictable funds for environmental damages caused by influx of refugees and natural disasters. In order to address financial needs in environmental activities, the best way is to ask for the increased share of UNEP from UN Regular Budget. We need also commitments of developed countries to make new and additional contributions to environmental funds. This solution could ensure the sustainability and predictability of financing UNEP and the other environmental bodies and, therefore, affect positively the performances of such programs and organizations in environmental fields.

My delegation associate itself with some other speakers in stressing the great importance and effectiveness of the efforts of civil societies and scientific communities in protecting the environment. However, unfortunately, the international support to such organizations

and communities is not promising. The new plan in GEF-4, so called Resource Allocation Framework, decreased considerably the financial resources which were available to environmental non-governmental organizations as a part of GEF Small Grants Program. We are certain that such policies and measures will discourage the civil societies to extend their invaluable contributions to protecting the environment.

We believe partnership could provide some of the required means to advance our efforts to protect environment. Needless to reason that engagement of all actors in management and action is a key to success. However, we have to be cautious enough in materialization of this concept so that to make sure more involvements will not lead to mismanagement or exploitation of natural resources in an unsustainable manner. The achievement of partnership requires rendering due respects for relevant intergovernmental decisions and the internationally agreed principles, such as social and environmental corporate responsibility, existence of certain rules and regulations for participation of non-state actors, pursuing certain policies at all levels such as enhancing capacity building, tech transfer and strengthening civil societies. It is evident that partnership should not be counted as a substitute for international cooperation.

My delegation has no difficulty, in principle, to go along with the position of universal membership of the Governing Council of UNEP. However, we are of the view that it will not make much change in order to reach the objective of strengthening environmental institutional framework at international level. The current membership of the Governing Council provides the opportunity for all member states and observers to be present in the meetings share their positions with the others on various issues in the meetings' agendas and take part in decision making. In addition, if the concept of universal membership takes place, questions will rise again in terms of emerging differences in the structures of funds and programs at large and, therefore, the need for their adaptation. We look forward to discussing further this issue and having an agreement at 64th Session of the UN General Assembly.

Given the various mandates of UNEP and the need for their implementation, my delegation is in favor of presence and active participation of the Program at field level, provided that we reach certain levels of progress at international level which requires that presence. We are of the view that more and closer interactions between the UNEP and the governments' focal points will contribute to the achievement of UNEP mandates and will strengthen environmental activities. But an appropriate atmosphere and ground at international level would be a precondition for usefulness of such a presence. Furthermore, focusing on strengthening environmental activities at international level by this Working Group at this stage could lead to better results.

Against this backdrop, we need to increase our efforts to implement unfulfilled decisions of the intergovernmental bodies to strengthen environmental activities. Unfortunately, we have not been able to create a favorable environment and encouraging atmosphere at international level to support national activities to protect the environment. Therefore, there is a reasonable concern that establishing new international environmental body or bodies at global level will add to the complexities, rather than facilitating the current

activities.

Mr. Co-Chairs

At this stage, it seems reiterating some internationally agreed principles such as common but differentiated responsibilities and focusing on the ways and means to implement the previous decisions would be the best way to render our mandate in this working group. To this end, I would like to propose the following solutions:

1. The implementation of unfulfilled decisions of intergovernmental gatherings, related to international environmental activities and governance,
2. Provision of additional and predictable financial resources for environmental activities,
3. Extending support to the national efforts through enhancement of capacity building and tech transfer, including by implementation of Bali Strategic Plan,
4. Revising the mandates of various organizations related to environment with a view to preventing duplications,
5. Escalating scientific research activities while increasing the share of scientists from developing countries,
6. Emphasizing the social and environmental corporate responsibilities, changing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption,
7. Working on further coordination and synergy among MEAs while respecting their autonomous legal status and mandates,
8. Strengthening monitoring, assessment and reporting mechanisms at national levels.

Last but not least, it is important to refer to environmental activities in the context of "sustainable development" as the overarching framework for the UN activities. Therefore, what is meant to be done, here, is to strengthen "environmental activities", not at the expense of other dimensions of sustainable development. Moreover, my delegation believes some other important parameters, such as the achievement of internationally agreed development goals including the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, should be taken into account in the deliberations on strengthening environmental activities. The implementation of poverty reduction strategies and the integration of environmental sustainability in national development plans, at national level, are certainly the other parameters which will help further protect the environment.