

Organization of the Work of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Ministers or Their Representatives for the Period April-December 2001*

Note by the secretariat

A. Introduction

1. The Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in its decision 21/21 of 9 February 2001 on international environmental governance, established an Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Ministers or Their Representatives to undertake a "comprehensive policy-oriented assessment of existing institutional weaknesses as well as future needs and options for strengthened international environmental governance, including the financing of the United Nations Environment Programme, with a view to presenting a report containing analysis and options to the next session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum".
2. To this end, the Council requested the Executive Director of UNEP to elaborate a report to be submitted to the Intergovernmental Group at its first meeting. The report of the Executive Director on international environmental governance was tabled at the first meeting of the Group as document UNEP/IGM/1/2.
3. The outcome of the first meeting of the Group has been distributed as a report of the Chair, and is before the second meeting as document UNEP/IGM/1/3.

B. Meetings of the Intergovernmental Group

4. During the debate on international environmental governance at the twenty-first session of the Governing Council, delegations were of the view that to ensure the cost-effectiveness of the work of the Intergovernmental Group and to maximize attendance by ministers, meetings should be held on the margins of ministerial meetings already scheduled to take place.
5. In pursuance of this objective, the first meeting of the Group took place in New York on 18 April 2001 immediately prior to the high-level segment of the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. At that meeting the President and the Bureau of the UNEP Governing Council were requested to consult further with a view to establishing a schedule of future meetings and venues.
6. In order to take the process forward, a joint meeting of the bureaux of the UNEP Governing Council, the UNEP Committee of Permanent Representatives and the

Commission on Sustainable Development at its tenth session took place in Stockholm on 23 May 2001, on the margins of the Conference of Plenipotentiaries convened to adopt the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.

7. After consultation with the other two bureaux, the Bureau of the Governing Council decided that the schedule of future meetings of the Group and their venues would be as follows:

- (a) 17 July 2001 – on the margins of the resumed sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change – Bonn, Germany;
 - (b) 9 and 10 September 2001 – Algiers, Algeria (in response to an offer by the Government of Algeria to host one of the meetings of the Group);
 - (c) 1 December 2001 – after the conclusion of the Intergovernmental Review Meeting on the Implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities – Montreal, Canada.
8. The Bureau further decided that an additional meeting may be held in New York in January 2002, immediately prior to the second session of the Commission on Sustainable Development acting as the preparatory body for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, in order to inform all delegations to the Preparatory Committee of progress made in this process.

C. Inter-sessional activities

9. In decision 21/21 the Governing Council also requested the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP, as the subsidiary body of the Council, to provide its due contribution to this process. The report of the Committee on its activities in pursuance of this objective is before the second meeting of the Group as document UNEP/IGM/2/3.

10. The Council also decided that the process should benefit from incorporating the views and perspectives of other United Nations entities, international financial institutions, expert institutions, major groups and individuals outside the United Nations system. To this end, a number of meetings with secretariats of multilateral environmental conventions were convened, and a meeting of the secretariats of a number of such conventions was convened by the Executive Director in New York on 18 April 2001 to discuss the outcome of the first meeting of the Open-ended Inter-

governmental Group. The outcome of these consultations is available on UNEP's Web page (<http://www1.unep.org/meas/>).

11. The Executive Director convened a multi-stakeholder consultative meeting in Nairobi between 22 and 25 May 2001, which enabled participants to consider the issues addressed in Governing Council decisions 21/21 (on international environmental governance) and 21/19 (on the role of civil society). The output of this meeting, with regard to international environmental governance, is before the present meeting in document UNEP/IGM/2/2.

12. The Executive Director also convened a meeting of representatives of independent expert institutions and individuals from developed and developing countries in Cambridge, United Kingdom on 28 and 29 May 2001. Their views are also contained in document UNEP/IGM/2/2.

13. Representatives of various United Nations specialized agencies, funds and programmes and convention secretariats participated in the second meeting of the Environmental Management Group which was held on 15 June 2001 in Geneva with the objective of providing their perspectives. Representatives of international organizations at the present meeting will be invited to provide their views under agenda item 3 (d).

14. A number of meetings continue to take place on issues related to international environmental governance, sponsored by various actors within and outside Governments. The UNEP secretariat will attempt to ensure that all relevant information concerning such meetings is provided to the Group in the form of information documents or briefings.

D. Outputs of the Intergovernmental Group

15. In decision 21/21 the Council also decided that the next session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum should undertake an in-depth discussion of the report of the Intergovernmental Group with a view to providing its input on future requirements of international environmental governance in the broader context of multilateral efforts for sustainable development to the tenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development acting as the preparatory body for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. It should be noted that the seventh special session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum is scheduled to take place from 13

* UNEP/IGM/2/INF/1.
See also page 194.

to 15 February 2002, after which its input will be provided to the third session of the Commission on Sustainable Development acting as the preparatory body for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which is scheduled to take place in New York from 25 March to 5 April 2002.

16. The report of the Executive Director on international environmental governance (UNEP/IGM/1/2) is intended to remain the basis for discussion. As agreed at the first

meeting of the Group on 18 April 2001, it will become a "living document" and is expected to undergo a process of refinement and reorientation following each meeting, reflecting issues raised in the Group and the consensus as it emerges. The report will be updated for the third meeting of the Group, in accordance with the views expressed at the second meeting, taking into account the documents and reports tabled at that meeting. In addition to an updated

report, at its third meeting the Group will also be provided with a proposal from the Chair outlining possible areas of consensus in the Group and policy orientations around which agreement could emerge. The Group may decide to focus its further consultations on this proposal with a view to finalizing a consensus document for presentation at the seventh special session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum.

