

*We are supportive of the idea to examine proposals for better management of environment institutions as well as for enhanced coordination among the institutions. It is important to cover these issues from a broad perspective, focusing on implementation at the country level, with a global environmental governance structure supportive of the same.*

*Drastic reengineering of environment bodies by collapsing them inwards is not necessarily a good idea. There is, in-fact, a good case for specialized and separate entities to serve specific mandates, which may otherwise not receive the emphasis or financial resources they deserve. Moreover, many environment bodies are young and have benefited from their geographic dispersal, including the establishment of UNEP in Nairobi, and relatively “independent” existence linked to the concerned Convention, e.g. Climate Change Secretariat at Berlin, Biodiversity at Montreal, Trans-Boundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes at Basel, etc. The essence of environmental action has to be impact at the grassroots level and along with a focus on development. Excessive centralization and bureaucratization may not be the right way to proceed.*

India has always supported efforts towards making IEG more effective and attuned to the needs and requirement of a majority of the members of the United Nations. The issue of protecting and preserving our environment is of utmost importance to developing countries like India as any deterioration of the environment severely impacts our ability to provide sustainable development to people. Yet, we see that the primary concern of sustainable development which includes the three pillars of economic development, social development and environmental protection are not given importance but rather an attempt is being made to bring environmental conditionalities onto the development process.

In 2005 we agreed upon the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building which seeks to strengthen the capacity of developing countries and provide systematic, targeted, long and short-term measures for technology support and capacity building through access to and support for environmentally sound technologies and corresponding know-how. Initiatives like this remains at the core of what we, the developing countries, are looking for when we discuss International Environment Governance. Developing countries want to implement strong measures for protection and promotion of the environment but are hampered by paucity of resources and capability. Provision of adequate financial and technology resources would go a long way in providing a sound international environment governance system. There is a need to ensure that UN environmental entities play an active role in making available advanced technologies to developing countries, and in a scientific capacity building. Unfortunately, discussions on IEG have tended to be limited to the role of UNEP.

India supports the strengthening of UNEP, particularly as an entity for scientific capacity building, and with a greater coordinating role. We do not see the benefit of creating an environmental behemoth with further bureaucracy and additional costs. The latter would only complicate matters, given the differing memberships in different treaties/bodies, and de-emphasize the importance of several issues that are served by the different bodies. It is important that, in our attempts to strengthen IEG, we avoid attempts to create new regulatory mechanisms, or another layer for norm-setting, in the area of environment. There is, in fact, a good case for specialized and separate entities to serve specific mandates, which may otherwise not receive the emphasis or financial resources they deserve. Effective environmental governance requires informed consensus on environmental management objectives and policies that are based on the good understanding of the shared roles and responsibilities of all players.

We feel that a better way to way to strengthen IEG is to enhance the capacity of UNEP to fill gaps that are unattended by Secretariats of individual conventions. These gaps mostly arise in the realm of interface management as far as Rio Conventions go. The UNEP should cease to be seen as a body constantly trying to parallel the activities of Convention Secretariats. The focus of UNEP should be in gap identification, effecting synergies amongst Conventions and in coordinating with the larger UN system for creating sustainable flow of funds to Convention related projects that are cross-cutting in nature instead of trying to be the first among equals.

India supports efforts for better management of international institutions dealing with the environment, as well as enhanced coordination among them. However, the objective of reform cannot merely be greater coordination, rather the objective should be on how UN entities can assist the efforts of developing countries in implementing their national plans. In this regard, the foremost issue that we should look at is the issue of financing, particularly the gap between mandates and the financial resources that are available. The developing countries need to continue to get Northern commitment and action to ensure funds for implementation of MEAs, Agenda 21 and other programmes. Developing countries needs to ensure that it has full and meaningful participation in the IEG and in the governance structure of financial institutions and mechanisms as well.

Yours sincerely,

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