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Emerging policy issues: environment and development

**Enhanced coordination across the United Nations system,
including the Environment Management Group**

Report of the Executive Director

Addendum

**Update on the status of implementation of the memorandum of
understanding between the United Nations Environment
Programme and the United Nations Development Programme**

Summary

In accordance with paragraph 5 of Governing Council decision 26/11 of 24 February 2011, the report provides an update on the status of activities undertaken by the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Development Programme pursuant to the memorandum of understanding between the two organizations.

* UNEP/GCSS.XII/1.

Background

1. In December 2008, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) signed a revised memorandum of understanding to facilitate, on a non-exclusive basis, cooperation and collaboration between the two organizations. The memorandum aims to ensure Governments' access to United Nations expertise in areas of common interest based on national priorities and development plans, and resulting in United Nations Development Assistance Framework outcomes. It identifies possible areas of cooperation, such as:

- (a) Climate change;
- (b) The Poverty and Environment Initiative;
- (c) Other environmental endeavours related to the implementation of Agenda 21; the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development; the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building; multilateral environmental agreements; and other international agreements in order to assist countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (based on their own national priorities and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks).

2. The memorandum provides a framework within which to strengthen collaboration between UNDP and UNEP by making it more strategic, effective and systematic. A joint UNEP/UNDP working group comprising five staff members from each programme was established in August 2010 to oversee and promote the implementation of the memorandum and to develop substantive areas of cooperation. The group usually meets each quarter via teleconference, but is able to meet as frequently as necessary. It is also expected to meet annually in a face-to-face meeting chaired by the Deputy Executive Director of UNEP and the Assistant Secretary-General and Director of the Bureau for Development Policy of UNDP. Since August 2011, seven meetings have been held: six via teleconference and one via videoconference.

3. Since the twenty-sixth session of the Governing Council, the group has continued to explore opportunities for strengthening programmatic and other substantive collaboration. To facilitate dialogue and the sharing of knowledge, the UNDP Teamworks knowledge-sharing platform was used to establish a joint space open to all staff members from the two organizations. All documents pertaining to the group's work are available on the platform.

4. The main initiatives of and current discussions in the group are described below. In addition, status updates are provided for other collaborative activities initiated in the context of United Nations inter-agency coordination structures or developed directly by various parts of the largely decentralized structures of UNDP and UNEP.

A. Collaboration typology study

5. In August 2011, building on a report on a joint inventory and analysis of UNDP/UNEP collaboration issued in April 2010, the group commissioned a comprehensive study of the various typologies of UNDP/UNEP collaboration at the global, regional and national levels. The main objective of the study is to conduct a systematic review of a selection of key collaborative initiatives, focusing on lessons learned related to strategic and operational issues and collaboration with a view to identifying various typologies of collaboration.

6. Case studies will include work under the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and the "One United Nations" initiative, regional coordination activities, MDG Achievement Fund joint programme initiatives, the Poverty and Environment Initiative, the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries, ecosystem-based adaptation activities, the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and the Global Environment Facility.

7. Key elements to be documented for each case study will include details related to: scope (strategic planning, programmatic or project); scale (global, regional or national); governance; management; funding and funding modality; financial management; procurement; roles and responsibilities; "One United Nations" context; external collaboration and partners; and results assessment.

8. For each category, the case studies will include both a descriptive component and an analytical component outlining lessons learned (for example, what worked and what did not work). A typology of UNDP/UNEP collaboration will be developed on the basis of the case studies and elements documented. It will include a summary matrix with a set of conclusions related to lessons learned and the typologies identified.

9. The joint working group will use the review to inform decisions on how to move forward in the implementation of the memorandum of understanding. It will also assist UNDP and UNEP programme staff who are working on or initiating new collaborative initiatives. The review began in October 2011 and is expected to be completed in early 2012.

B. Dialogue on possible further initiatives for strengthening collaboration

10. In June 2011, to increase momentum in the implementation of the memorandum of understanding between UNDP and UNEP, the Executive Director of UNEP shared with the Administrator of UNDP several potential scenarios for deepening collaboration between the two organizations at the regional and national levels. In response, in mid-August 2011, the Administrator of UNDP proposed that the issue should be considered by the joint working group, taking full account of discussions surrounding the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and coherence across the United Nations system.

11. The group subsequently initiated discussions to identify ways to strengthen collaboration. It has been agreed that the specific proposals that will be developed for consideration by the senior management of the two organizations will be informed by, among others, the outcome of the above-mentioned UNDP/UNEP collaboration typology study. Furthermore, it has been agreed that strengthening cooperation at the global, regional and national levels should be considered along two lines: using the enhanced collaboration between UNDP and UNEP as the backbone of United Nations system-wide coordinated support needed by Member States within the framework of the environmental activities conducted by all United Nations agencies; and the imperative to deliver as one within this United Nations system-wide framework, looking more closely at collaboration between UNDP and UNEP.

12. Lastly, some potential first steps have been identified, including initiatives jointly to promote the United Nations system. A package of proposals is expected to be presented to the senior management of the two organizations in early 2012.

C. Roll-out of the United Nations Development Group guidance notes on environmental sustainability, climate change and disaster risk reduction

13. Since the twenty-sixth session of the Governing Council, UNDP and UNEP have continued to collaborate under the auspices of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) in the integrated roll-out of the guidance notes on environmental sustainability, climate change and disaster risk reduction. The guidance notes were developed by, among others, the UNDG task team on environmental sustainability and climate change (co-chaired by UNDP and UNEP) and are examples of UNDP and UNEP jointly contributing to the collaborative efforts of the wider United Nations system in the area of environment and climate change.

14. In July and August 2011, and as part of the roll-out of the guidance notes, key UNDP and UNEP staff, in partnership with the United Nations System Staff College, regional UNDG teams and others, conducted regional training workshops in Bangkok, Nairobi and Panama City for 83 members of United Nations country teams in countries where new United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks were scheduled to be rolled out. The workshops were targeted at enhancing the capacities of the country teams in order to ensure the suitable reflection of environmental sustainability, climate change and disaster risk reduction in the frameworks, which form the basis for United Nations collaboration with partner countries.

D. Framework for advancing environmental and social sustainability in the United Nations system

15. In 2011, UNDP and UNEP continued to co-chair the consultative process on safeguards. Initiated by the Environment Management Group in September 2009, the process featured an inter-agency review and mapping exercise and the preparation of a report that explored options for a common United Nations system approach to “environmental and social safeguards”, which came to be referred to as “an environmental and social sustainability framework. The consultative process culminated in the submission of a progress report in August 2011 that contained a framework for advancing environmental and social sustainability in the United Nations system.

16. The framework sets out three areas for the application of environmental and social sustainability measures: policy and strategy; programmes and projects; and operations and facilities. The report provides:

(a) The elements of a common framework for environmental and social sustainability in the United Nations system;

- (b) The context for a common framework, based on international good practices and a stocktake of precedents and expectations internal and external to the United Nations;
- (c) Findings of an inter-agency review and mapping exercise to identify examples of current United Nations internal environmental and social sustainability measures, activities and initiatives within the United Nations system;
- (d) Issues for exploration in the next phase of the framework's development, which will focus on implementation;
- (e) Conclusion and recommendations for next steps.

17. The report's annexes provide more detailed explanation of some of the sustainability framework elements and of how environmental and social sustainability measures are being applied internally and externally, including an in-depth case study of experience acquired in the World Health Organization to date.

18. The report has been submitted as part of the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development to show how the United Nations can demonstrate leadership and enhance accountability, highlighting the ways in which the United Nations system's policies and practices are consistent with internationally agreed environmental and social sustainability principles.

E. Input into the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

19. In February 2011, the mandate and scope of the work of the UNDG task team on environmental sustainability and climate change were expanded to incorporate coordination of UNDG input into the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. Accordingly, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs became the third co-chair of the task team, which was duly renamed the "task team on environmental sustainability, climate change and Rio +20".

20. In August 2011, the task team initiated a survey of 135 United Nations country teams (covering 180 countries) to provide details of the level of support being extended to their respective host Governments in terms of preparedness to tackle new and emerging issues, the green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and the institutional framework for sustainable development.

21. On the basis of the survey, a brief report was drafted as UNDG input into the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. The report comprised a set of observations and recommendations on how the United Nations could, at the country level, better support Member States to develop the themes of the Conference in their countries. It also highlighted key areas and challenges warranting further consideration and action, including the need better to balance the social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable development initiatives; support for the development of coordination mechanisms for United Nations country teams and Governments; lack of clarity and understanding around the themes of the Conference, particularly the institutional framework for sustainable development, at both the country team and government level; and a lack of clear data, indicators and outcomes to inform sustainable development activities. These findings will serve as a basis for the preparation by the task team of a more comprehensive analytical report.

F. Sustainable energy

22. UNDP and UNEP collaborate extensively in the area of sustainable energy. Examples of this collaboration are given below.

23. The Secretary-General's "Sustainable Energy for All" initiative calls upon the United Nations system, Governments, the private sector and civil society to come together to drive a clean energy revolution with specific commitments and practical actions for universal access to sustainable energy for all by 2030. The Administrator of UNDP and the Executive Director of UNEP are members of a high-level group established by the Secretary-General to develop a global action agenda for sustainable energy for all by 2030, to be launched at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. Through their mandates, UNDP and UNEP will help shape the agenda, which will guide the implementation of activities by Member States following the Conference. The initiative builds on, among other things, the work of the United Nations mechanism for inter-agency coordination on energy (UN-Energy), under whose auspices UNDP and UNEP have, since 2004, worked to promote the global agenda for expanding energy access through a cluster spearheaded by UNDP and renewable energy through a cluster spearheaded by UNEP.

24. In the context of the Climate Investment Funds, which provide grants and concessional financing to developing countries, UNDP and UNEP contributed to the discussions on and the implementation of a programme on scaling up renewable energy in low-income countries as two of the three United Nations agencies representing the United Nations system as observers. Working in coordination, UNDP and UNEP contributed to shaping the global discussions with multilateral development banks; UNDP, through the Resident Coordinator system, mobilized United Nations country teams to support coordination in the six low-income countries where the programme is being implemented to help scale up the use of renewable energy. UNEP and UNDP collaborated in a number of these countries, including through joint missions, to provide technical support to United Nations country teams.

G. Making the transition to a green economy

25. An emerging funding opportunity is being seized through UNDP/UNEP and Department of Economic and Social Affairs discussions on a joint initiative with two main components: one on the green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and the other on sustainable agriculture and food security. The joint initiative is intended to enhance the engagement and effective participation of developing countries in the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, to contribute to laying foundations for political consensus, and to assist in the formulation and implementation of policies and strategies to achieve a transition to a green economy, building on the Conference outcomes. The initiative will use existing support provided to partner countries through United Nations country teams, UNDP country offices and UNEP regional offices.

H. Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund joint programmes

26. The Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund was established in December 2006 to accelerate efforts at the country level to attain the Millennium Development Goals, to support United Nations reform and to implement the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness: Ownership, Harmonisation, Alignment, Results and Mutual Accountability. In total, the Fund manages 128 joint programmes in 49 countries under eight thematic windows in line with the Goals.

27. UNEP is the convener for the environment and climate change thematic window. The terms of reference for the window were developed jointly with UNDP, and both UNEP and UNDP were part of the technical advisory committee for the review and selection of concept notes under the chairship of UNEP. The two organizations continue to work together in support of the Fund secretariat, especially in terms of knowledge management activities, where UNDP provides the technical platform and UNEP generates and shares environmental knowledge.

28. UNEP is also an implementing partner in 15 joint programmes. While these joint programmes comprise up to 10 United Nations partners each, the main counterpart of UNEP at the country level has been UNDP. As it is often the lead agency for the joint programmes, UNDP provides administrative and logistical support to UNEP, especially in cases where the latter has no country presence. UNEP and UNDP are often found to complement each other: UNEP has assumed the role of technical lead or adviser on environment, a role that includes the development of environmental policies and policy options at the national, regional and local levels together with national partners, providing tools, best practices and lessons learned to local communities, and undertaking training and capacity development. UNDP, on the other hand, has turned this technical and policy knowledge into specific development support through demonstration sites, pilot activities and other hands-on activities, drawing on its formidable knowledge of the countries and its capacity to operate at the national level.

I. Global South-South Development Expo 2011

29. UNEP worked in close collaboration with the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation hosted by UNDP in the coordination and hosting of a solution forum on climate change and food security, one of the six thematic areas considered at the Global South-South Development Expo that was held at the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome from 5 to 9 December 2011. The Expo is an annual inter-agency event that serves as a platform for the international community to share Southern development successes, to explore new avenues for South-South and triangular cooperation, to forge innovative and inclusive partnerships and to launch collaborative initiatives aimed at attaining internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, through South-South and triangular cooperation.

30. The 2011 Expo brought together senior government officials from developing countries, United Nations agencies, donor organizations, the private sector and civil society organizations to share Southern-generated solutions to food security problems. It featured six solution exchange forums on the following themes:

- (a) Agriculture, food security and capacity development;
- (b) Social protection, agriculture and food security;
- (c) Climate change, environment and food security;
- (d) Food security, nutrition and HIV/AIDS;
- (e) Global health, agriculture and food security
- (f) Renewable energy, agribusiness and food security.

31. UNDP was the overall convenor of the Expo and UNEP the designated host of the solution forum on climate change and food security. UNEP showcased its catalytic role and partnership approach in promoting green agriculture outcomes that did not erode natural capital in the use and management of land and food systems.

32. In addition, UNEP used the occasion of the Expo to demonstrate a South-South cooperation exchange mechanism – an interactive knowledge sharing portal – to showcase the profile of South-South cooperation on environmental matters. When launched, the portal will be one of the first web platforms specifically dedicated to promoting South-South cooperation in the field of environment and sustainable development. It will document case studies and stories on South-South cooperation on environmental matters and share success stories and best practices, promote lessons learned and up-to-date news and information. The potential for environmental South-South cooperation and selected case studies were discussed at the Expo.

J. Update on the Climate Change Adaptation and Development programme

33. Climate Change and Development – Adapting by Reducing Vulnerability (CC-DARE) is the name of a programme jointly implemented by UNEP and UNDP under the “One United Nations” banner using funds provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. The programme provides timely technical and financial support on a demand-driven basis to countries in sub-Saharan Africa and small island developing States for flexible and targeted actions to break down barriers and create opportunities for integrating climate change adaptation into national development planning and decision-making frameworks.

34. From 2008 to 2011, 11 countries (Benin, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Togo, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania) were fully engaged in the programme, with 37 targeted activities implemented. Eleven projects to consolidate successful activities are under way.

35. The programme has made its mark by implementing in partner countries specific climate change adaptation actions that will continue to provide the countries, on a sustainable basis, with resilient livelihoods in the face of a changing climate. The programme has had impacts on multiple fronts, including catalytic, strategic, policy and innovative processes. For example, as a result of the rainwater harvesting project in Seychelles, the Ministry of Education introduced rainwater harvesting in schools, and a bill is in process that will, among other things, make provision for the integration of rainwater harvesting into all building codes.

36. The programme has demonstrated that it is possible to achieve consolidated solutions for national priorities on adaptation to climate change that serve communities. As the programme ends in early 2012, it is imperative to launch a second phase to ensure that the lessons learned are consolidated.

K. Update on the scaling up of the Poverty and Environment Initiative

37. The scaling up of the Poverty and Environment Initiative continues to draw on the lessons learned from efforts during the pilot stage, while initiating country-level poverty and environment mainstreaming programmes as part of this expansion. Through this effort, regional strategies, 11 new country programmes and various country dialogues have been developed and initiated. To date, the initiative has more than doubled its country engagement and is currently actively supporting 17 full joint country programmes. The programmes are structured as follows:

- (a) Nine country programmes in Africa (Botswana, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania). The programme in Uganda came to an end at the beginning of 2011;
- (b) Five country programmes in Asia (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal and Thailand);
- (c) One country programme in Latin America and the Caribbean (Uruguay);
- (d) Two country programmes in the Commonwealth of Independent States (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan).

38. Dialogue on scaling up efforts in additional countries is under way in Latin America and the Caribbean (Dominican Republic and Guatemala) and in Asia (Timor-Leste). In addition, technical support has been provided to seven countries that are not currently part of the initiative: Armenia, Burundi, Liberia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam. Overall, 37 requests for support have been received to date.

39. The initiative is a prime example of successful UNDP/UNEP collaboration under joint budgeting, management and programming arrangements and of how such collaboration influences national, subnational and United Nations Development Assistance Framework planning processes using each agency's comparative advantage. It is therefore an excellent demonstration of the sort of collaboration envisaged through the implementation of the memorandum of understanding between UNDP and UNEP. In particular, the implementation arrangements comprising joint UNDP/UNEP regional teams that work as single units to manage each regional programme and the country programmes under their responsibility serve as useful models for possible replication in other future inter-agency initiatives at the global, regional and country levels. This is reflected in decision of 26/11 of the UNEP Governing Council, by which UNEP was urged to consider using the Poverty and Environment Initiative as a model for future collaboration with UNDP and with other United Nations agencies, where relevant, building on the comparative advantages of each organization.

L. Update on the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries

40. While the partnership arrangements for the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD) involve actors beyond UNDP and UNEP, the governance and management approaches in place and the specific roles and inputs of UNDP and UNEP nonetheless serve to demonstrate effective inter-agency collaboration by UNDP and UNEP along the lines envisaged in the memorandum of understanding between the two organizations.

41. The UN-REDD programme builds on the convening power and expertise of FAO, UNDP and UNEP, both at the international level, particularly in harmonizing normative frameworks and organizing joint events, and at the national level, where joint missions and sharing of information result in coordinated support interventions. The programme offers opportunities for UNEP, UNDP and FAO to deliver as one United Nations in supporting national efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. The programme is applying innovative modalities, such as an inter-agency secretariat to facilitate and enhance coordination, and a policy board that includes full membership for recipient countries, indigenous peoples' representatives, civil society, donors and United Nations agencies.

42. As at October 2011, the programme comprised 35 national partner countries, 13 of which were continuing to receive funding for their national programmes. The national programmes are implemented as joint programmes, building on UNDG principles and best practices. For example, UNEP and FAO have agreed to apply the United Nations Development Group Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers, a common operational framework for transferring cash to government and non-government implementing partners. In 2012, the programme will continue to strengthen the coordination of the joint programmes and measures to ensure that they are implemented as integrated, nationally owned programmes.

M. Tackling challenges

43. The above examples point to a measure of success in establishing and implementing collaborative initiatives, especially at the programmatic level, as envisaged in the memorandum of understanding. Some common elements that have made collaboration a success include:

- (a) Creation of innovative mechanisms to overcome operational constraints;

- (b) Institutional tools that provide the framework for collaboration (United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and the “Delivering as one” initiative);
- (c) Choice of initiatives that cut across UNDP and UNEP strategic priorities, successfully combining upstream and downstream activities to expand impact;
- (d) Clarity in the entry points for collaboration leading to joint programming and a clear articulation of the desired results;
- (e) Creation of funding opportunities and professional commitments so that agency representatives can work collaboratively.

44. The above successes notwithstanding, challenges remain and collaboration between UNDP and UNEP is not yet as effective as it should be. These challenges must be tackled collectively both by the joint working group and individually by UNEP and UNDP.

45. There is a need to improve operational conditions and, more specifically, to develop common guidelines and procedures in such areas as budgeting, financial management and administrative systems, including incompatible software or systems and templates for collaboration agreements, in order to remove barriers to cooperation. There is also a need to deal with mismatched programming and planning cycles that continue to hinder collaboration and make it difficult to synchronize joint programming and joint activities.

46. In addition, there needs to be mutual appreciation of each agency’s comparative advantage, respecting the strengths of working at various levels (country-level presence versus regional and global presence), and to look at the collaboration as a win-win partnership that goes beyond traditional partners, for example by recognizing a role for line ministries beyond ministries of environment. In addition, there is a need to take advantage of regional-level structures, which have the potential to promote collaboration by serving as valuable entry points for joint initiatives.

47. The lessons learned through the above and other collaborative efforts and the typology study will generate potential solutions and approaches to tackling the challenges and further enhancing collaboration.

N. Way forward

48. The above examples represent a small sample of UNDP/UNEP strategic and programmatic collaboration at various levels. The joint working group will continue to explore ways of articulating approaches to enhancing the spirit and practice of joint initiatives as envisaged in the memorandum of understanding.

49. In this context, the collaboration typology study is seen as particularly relevant and timely for providing the basis, evidence, lessons learned and analytical framework for guiding the group in taking forward the implementation of the memorandum of understanding.

50. Equally important is the need for the group to follow closely the relevant processes leading up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the potential impacts that they may have on current and future collaborative initiatives between UNDP and UNEP to ensure that outcomes of strategic importance and relevance to the collaboration are duly reflected in the group’s deliberations and planned activities.

51. Within the United Nations, in the context of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and beyond, UNDP and UNEP will continue to advocate and jointly promote the further development of the framework for advancing environmental and social sustainability in the United Nations system as a means of enhancing system-wide coherence and improving delivery for sustainable development.

52. In 2012, UNDP and UNEP will improve joint mechanisms to facilitate country engagement in promoting sustainable development, building on the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the lessons learned to date in United Nations country team joint programming and the work of the regional UNDG teams. In addition, in the context of the Conference, as mentioned above UNDP and UNEP are developing a joint initiative aimed at providing targeted advisory services and technical support to enable a transition to a green economy in developing and least developed countries in preparation for the Conference and beyond.

53. Attention will be paid to coherence between UNDP engagement and UNEP engagement in the evolving institutional framework within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change process. Following the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the

Kyoto Protocol, held in Cancun, Mexico, from 29 November to 10 December 2010, various new institutional mechanisms at both the global and regional levels began to be developed, including the Green Climate Fund, the Climate Technology Centre and Network, and the Cancun Adaptation Framework. These mechanisms afford an important opportunity for UNDP and UNEP to promote a more aligned approach to their work on climate change. Indeed, engagement by both UNDP and UNEP with the technical support unit for the design of the Green Climate Fund during 2011 stands as an important example of how integrated advocacy and engagement can yield strong results for both organizations and the climate change process at large. Such alignment will be key for the other mechanisms under design within the Convention process.

54. Lastly, the joint working group will explore further opportunities for and approaches to raising the profile of the memorandum of understanding and promoting opportunities for collaboration between staff members in UNDP and UNEP.
