

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**Remarks of the Director-General of UNON at the opening of
the 12th Special Session of the Governing Council/Global
Ministerial Environment Forum**

20 February 2012

Your Excellency Mwai Kibaki, President of the Republic of Kenya,

Your Excellency Ms Graciela Muslera, Acting President of UNEP's Governing Council,

Excellencies Ministers and Members of the Governing Council,

Mr. Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP,

Dr. Joan Clos, Executive Director of UN-HABITAT,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies & Gentlemen,

Allow me to welcome you all to the United Nations Office at Nairobi, the only UN-Headquarters in Africa and indeed in the global South.

My presence today is the result of the efforts by your respective Governments to have the General Assembly of the United Nations adopt a decision, in December 2009, to establish a dedicated post of Director-General for UNON at the level of

Under-Secretary-General.¹

I am humbled to be the first incumbent to this position and I am determined to do my best in order to fulfill my mandate and upgrade the Nairobi duty station to be at par with the two other sister offices in Geneva and Vienna.

Our appreciation goes to Your Excellency President Mwai Kibaki and through you to the Government and the people of Kenya for hosting UNON the two global Headquarters of UNEP and UN-HABITAT as well as great number of UN entities so generously.

Your support is tangible in our daily lives and perhaps best illustrated by the magnificent site of 150 acres on which this campus is built, the upgrade of the infrastructure leading to and from this complex, the strengthening of the security at all UN facilities in and outside Nairobi, the critical role by the Kenyan representatives in the General Assembly to secure, adequate

¹ General Assembly resolution 64/243

resources, as well as the privileges and facilities enjoyed by the UN staff and their families in this duty station.

As you may recall, UNON was established in January 1996 through the merger of the two separate divisions of administration of UNEP and UN-Habitat, UNEP's Conference Services Section as well as the UN Common Services Unit.

This merger was justified, including to the General Assembly and the Governing Councils of UNEP and UN-HABITAT, on the basis of significant, and subsequently demonstrated, economies of scale and agglomeration. The current structure of UNON includes the Office of the Director-General, Divisions of Administration, Conference Services, Security and Safety as well as the United Nations Information Centre.

As UNON is not as well known as it should be, permit me to briefly present its functions.

According to the Secretary General's Bulletin, the "United Nations Office at Nairobi serves as the representative office of the Secretary General in Nairobi and performs

representation and liaison functions with Permanent Missions, the Host Country and other governments, and inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations in Nairobi, as well as other organizations of the United Nations system in Kenya; facilitates cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations; provides administrative and other support services to UNEP and UN-HABITAT; provides joint and common services to other organizations of the United Nations System in Kenya;

manages and implements the programme of administration, conference services and public information and provides security and safety services for United Nations staff and facilitates in the United Nations office at Nairobi.

Some of the roles and functions of UNON as well as the diplomatic and political responsibilities of the Director-General need to be fully developed.

Sixteen years later, the role of UNON as custodian and manager of the financial, human and physical resources of UNEP and UN-HABITAT as well as the provider of a wide range of common

services to 41 UN entities in or operating from Nairobi, is more than ever justified in the face of the global financial crisis; and your Governments' legitimate expectation that our Organization should strive for greater efficiency and cost effectiveness and eliminate duplication and inefficiencies.

In his address to the Staff last month, at the start of his second term, the Secretary-General indeed urged us to pull together to steam line work and I quote "make better use of common services and maximize synergies"; He also promised a new generation of the "UN Delivering As One".

I am determined to see UNON championing the implementation of the Secretary-General's reform agenda, including his vision of a UN that delivers more with existing resources and that challenges barriers, and strive for "improved effectiveness and coherence".

Soon after assuming office 9 months ago and in order to establish a base-line for UNON service provision and effectiveness as well as its level of transparency and accountability, I constituted a team

which undertook an indepth review of recent audits and evaluations of UNON, given the fact that UNON has been subject of a number of evaluations and audits in the last three years alone. Priority has been given to the areas that need immediate reform and strengthening such as ICT and procurement services, outreach activities of United Nations Information Centre as well as host country relations which is now in the office of the Director-General.

Based on these evaluations, I have articulated my vision and priorities for UNON that I have shared with all those concerned.

Steps are also taken in order to review the administrative roles and responsibilities between UNON divisions as well as between UNON and its major clients with the only aim to see this review leading to an improvement of our administrative services, the elimination of duplication and overlap and more clarity on roles and responsibilities.

While implementing its mandate fully and progressively, UNON will do its best to provide a common umbrella for United Nations activities here in Kenya.

- to engage actively with the host government and the diplomatic community on a diverse set of operational, diplomatic and protocol issues;
- to encourage sub-regional organizations to strengthen their cooperation with the United Nations family in Kenya and
- to strengthen our reach out and information to the public of the activities of our Organization in Kenya and in East Africa through United Nations Information Centre.

This will help address the lack of shared vision and understanding about UNON's mandate (among its clients).

Improving relations and administrative services to our main clients UNEP and UN-HABITAT is one of my substantive priorities. I will take decisive steps in order to reinforce client orientation of UNON in its delivery of service and to demonstrate more transparency, efficiency and effectiveness.

This will help us develop more cohesion, trust and confidence among all staff of UNON, UNEP and UN-HABITAT.

Steps are also taken to revitalize and strengthen all forums for strategic, service and operational consultations between UNON, UNEP and UN-HABITAT and the Resident Coordinator of the UN Country Team, as required.

This headquarters is yours and I would like to see its facilities, which are being gradually renovated thanks to your financial support, fully utilized for meetings and functions.

I also aimed at working closely with the Kenyan Government to have an increased number of high profile and strategic meetings, such as this one, held on these premises.

On behalf of UNON's staff and management, I would like to congratulate Mr. Achim Steiner as well as the previous Executive-Directors here present, the management and staff of UNEP for your immense contribution over the past 40 years in shaping the UN environmental policies, spearheading our

Organization agenda in this field; for advising and providing technical expertise to Governments and thus impacting, indirectly, the lives of millions (especially in Africa and the wider “global South”).

Allow me also to thank those of the Executive Directors who have served as the Director-General of UNON for your invaluable contribution.

I thank you for your attention.