PROPOSAL FOR A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO COORDINATION OF MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS
Proposal for a Systematic Approach to Coordination of Multilateral Environmental Agreements

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations, its specialized agencies and the secretariats of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) are already active in a number of initiatives to enhance their coordination in a number of areas. These range from the ongoing meetings of the MEA convention secretariats under the aegis of UNEP, the ongoing initiatives in harmonizing national reporting, and the implementation of joint work programmes under MOUs signed between different convention secretariats covering cross-cutting issues, among others.

2. Yet the implementation of the collaboration initiatives have been piecemeal rather than the result of a deliberate, overarching strategic choice. A strategic vision for collaboration and coordination amongst MEAs has to take into account not only the lessons learned but also marshal limited resources - human and financial - to leverage change.

3. The "Policy paper for Improving International Environmental Governance among Multilateral Environmental Agreements: Negotiable Terms for Further Discussion", delineates a number of institutional mechanisms to take the process forward. It endeavours to establish a structure for system-wide cooperation encompassing UN agencies and MEAs, as we as promoting coordination and cooperation at the national level.

4. In order to actualize these interlocking goals, new supporting policies, processes and procedures will need to be put into place. This paper on a systematic approach to coordination builds on the above-mentioned paper for improving international environmental governance and proposes objectives, expected outcomes, strategies and actions to enhance coordination among MEAs.

5. The proposal which follows is a follow-up to the dialogue emanating from the two consultative meetings with MEAs on IEG (Nairobi, 11-12 February 2001 and New York, 18 April 2001), and is largely an extension of the exchange of ideas leading to the production of document UNEP/IGM/1/INF/3 entitled "International Environmental Governance: Multilateral Environmental Agreements", which was presented to the First Meeting of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Ministers or Their Representatives on International Environmental Governance (New York, 18 April 2001). The Second Consultative Meeting of MEAs on 18 April agreed that a systematic approach for promoting collaboration and coordination among conventions was desirable. Since the representatives of MEA secretariats were unable to report back to their parties on the substance of this paper, given time restraints, their inputs and views were provided in their capacity as experts, rather than as representatives of MEAs.

II. The Vision

6. Our vision of coordination hinges on a partnership approach among the multilateral environmental conventions, UNEP and other intergovernmental organizations in the implementation and operationalization of "4 Cs" - Coordination, Coherence, Compliance and Capacity building.
7. According to this vision, coordination is a process rather than a one-time event. The process calls for a continual dialogue between the partners - the UN agencies, the bureaux of the parties, the subsidiary bodies, the assessment and technology panels and the governments. The vision calls for bringing together all the major actors to discuss, debate and agree on the components that will support the harmonized and coordinated implementation of the conventions at the national level. The centerpiece of the coordination process will be the implementation of the conventions at the national level.

8. The outputs of these meetings will be coordinated strategy/ies developed in consultation with the partner MEAs and IGOs. As the circumstances change, the coordination process will generate complementary strategies that will be required to be incorporated.

### III. Mechanisms for issue prioritization and coordination

9. With the proliferation of MEAs at the global and regional level, there is an increasing need for a strategic approach. To better coordinate the work of the MEAs, what is required first is to develop mechanisms for prioritizing issues that require coordination and leveraging synergies. The policy paper on improving international environmental governance lists a number of institutional mechanisms that could be established for this purpose.

10. The proposed regular meetings of the Bureaux of the Conference of the Parties and subsidiary bodies on scientific and technical aspects and the establishment of the interagency coordination group for supporting the implementation of environmental conventions could offer venues wherein priorities and synergies could be identified.

11. As a first step, the MEAs should take stock of ongoing initiatives by undertaking an in depth transparent study on prospects for true synergies and existing bottlenecks involving all stakeholders. Such an overview would not only help to get a comprehensive perspective on the activities of the MEAs but also likely to detect potential room for synergies and better coordination among MEAs and IGOs. In addition, this survey should identify current institutional hurdles and bottlenecks and ask what concrete steps can be taken to facilitate and enhance coordination and collaboration among MEAs. The overview should also arrive at a preliminary cost-benefit analysis of individual initiatives and the ultimate impact of leveraging synergies and how it can be improved. This will require inputs from countries addressing the operational impact and measurable impact of coordination among the MEAs.

12. At the second consultative meeting of the MEAs on IEG on 18 April 2001 in New York, it was decided that promotion of collaboration and coordination could be done at three levels of clustering: sectoral (as among biodiversity-related conventions in the management of eco-systems and species); functional (for example on trade related issues); and at the regional level (capacity building, compliance and enforcement, pooling of resources, and complementary legislation ) The implementation of clustering at all the three levels calls for consultations with the conventions and specific proposals from them.

13. Alongside there is also the need to implement the suggestion made at the 9th Meeting on Coordination of Secretariats of Environmental Conventions to analyze the state of cooperation and collaboration among biodiversity related conventions and regional seas conventions was required. This will enable UNEP and related conventions to approach collaboration in a more
systematic and cohesive manner.

14. There is also a requirement for an up-to-date inventory of MOUs arrived at between the MEAs and the IGOs as well as related decisions of the Conference of the Parties.

15. The policy paper on international environmental governance among MEAs has suggested the establishment of a mechanism for monitoring the decisions of MEAs with a view to identifying inconsistencies and opportunities for synergies. This mechanism, which could be set up under the aegis of UNEP, should continuously track development in each convention on a routine basis to alert other conventions about duplications and capture synergies.

IV. Scientific and Technical cooperation

16. The growing importance of science within policy-making and the recognition of the co-dependence of ecosystems, has given rise to questions of whether more integrated scientific mechanisms or processes between MEAs would be more conducive to identifying synergistic policies and exploiting the bio-geophysical relationships between the MEAs.

17. The policy paper on improving international environmental governance among MEAs indicates the need for holding regular meetings of the subsidiary bodies on scientific and technical aspects of the MEAs. An annual meeting of the Chairpersons of the SBSTAs of the MEAs including the STAP of GEF could enhance coordination in this field. In this context, the suggestion made at the 9th Meeting on Coordination of Conventions to convene periodic meetings of the Chairs of assessment panels of different conventions and protocols to maximize the benefits of limited human and financial resources available for their functioning and operation must be noted.

18. Another suggestion made at the same meeting and worthy of implementation is the preparation of a comprehensive biennial report providing a synopsis of the reports of the panels of different but related MEAs, which could help promote interlinkages and synergies.

19. IPCC has carried out periodic assessments on the state of knowledge of causes of climate change, its potential impacts and options for response strategies. Over the years, the IPCC assessments have provided the scientific basis for negotiations and decision making on climate change. It has also prepared special reports and technical papers on specific issues that require independent scientific information and advice, several of which were requested by UNFCCC. As the completion of the IPCC Third Assessment Report nears, the IPCC is considering its future work programme. One of the issues being discussed is its potential to carry out assessments that will also serve the needs of other MEAs, particularly on matters that relate to climate change. Recently, IPCC received a request from CBD to carry out an assessment on the interlinkages between climate change and biological diversity and will take a decision on this in the near future. Such an endeavour would contribute to the enhancement of scientific collaboration among MEAs by streamlining the needs and means of conducting assessments required under MEAs.

20. Environmental indicators should be put back into the spotlight as an instrument for measuring the performance and achievements of the MEAs taking into account the need to better link scientific assessments to policy.
V. Harmonization of information systems, information exchanges and information access

21. An oft-discussed issue in various meetings of the MEAs is the creation of a common entry point via the World Wide Web for all MEAs. This can enable improved access to information in national reports; improved feedback to Parties on implementation; provisions to conduct electronic searches while allowing users to tailor information retrieval to their needs; and opportunities to archive documents and retain easy access.

22. This common entry point can be linked to the establishment of a "lessons learned network" to encourage sharing of experience from beneficial case studies. This network should endeavor to select lessons learned from existing secretariat documents, develop Web site prototypes and establish links to other lessons learned facilities and MEA clearinghouses.

23. A target date for making real advances in information support to environmental assessment and planning should be established in this regard.

Harmonizing National Reporting

24. Benefits of harmonization of reporting will accrue to all stakeholders, including national governments, MEA secretariats and governance bodies. At the national level, governments will be encouraged to identify a consolidated list of obligations in a cross-sectoral manner, identify national priorities on implementation of MEAs in a holistic manner, improve awareness of national obligations and compliance of MEAs within governments at all levels, identify gaps in national legislation and policies and improve the ability to implement country-driven actions in support of treaty commitments.

25. Harmonization of reporting will also benefit MEA secretariats. It will enable them to encourage and support governments in (a) the implementation of their own national priorities; (b) the preparation of global, regional and thematic analyses to help the COPs to assess achievement of treaty objectives and setting future priorities; (c) improving an integrated analysis capacity and an enhanced ability to coordinate interagency programmes of work through sharing of information and experiences; and (d) improved linkages with international environmental monitoring agencies, major data custodians and regional treaties.

26. The future implementation of the harmonization of national reporting can be achieved through short term and medium term objectives. The short-term will encompass objectives such as test and reviewing the opportunities and needs for a range of potential mechanisms for increased streamlining and harmonization, and providing supporting tools and demonstration actions to assist both contracting parties and secretariats in the process of streamlining.

27. In the medium-term, the objectives will be to review the results of these tests and identify how to implement them in the context of the needs and governance structures of the different MEAs, and identify further actions to be taken at the national and international levels to increase streamlining and harmonization, including inter alia capacity building at the national level.

28. Achieving these objectives will require standing linkages between the MEAs in a number of areas, including inter alia:
• further harmonization and interlinkages of websites and other information dissemination;
• consistency on information management practices and technologies;
• coordination of scientific methodology considerations such as indicators;
• developing and coordinating a joint capacity building programme in information management and related Internet technology; and
• management of a shared lessons-learned library.

VI. Compliance and enforcement

29. There is a need to focus the attention of the MEAs in a coordinated manner on the advancement and enhancement of the implementation of agreed international norms and policies, as well as to foster compliance with environmental principles and international agreements.

30. Only recently have provisions on monitoring and evaluation been included in the MEAs. This is a trend bound to continue as new environmental agreements are developed. In recent years, Governments have also focused their attention towards the implementation and enforcement of multilateral environmental agreements.

31. Proposed areas of coordinated action between the MEAs include:

• joint promotion and strengthening of regular exchange of information, training and public awareness programmes to support compliance with MEAs, including at the cluster level;
• undertaking joint research initiatives to assess and determine the extent, size and magnitude and nature of legal and illegal trade in MEAs;
• joint development of guidelines for cooperation at national, regional and global levels on compliance and enforcement of MEAs;
• coordinated action to support parties to the environmental conventions to develop and/or strengthen national laws and regulations to enhance enforcement and compliance with MEAs; and
• establishment of enforcement focal points for better coordination at the global, national and regional levels.

VII. Capacity Building

32. Capacity building for the implementation of MEAs places an imperative on a coordinated approach, which crosses administrative and sectoral boundaries, involving the major stakeholders.
33. A coordinated approach to capacity building will involve the following objectives:

- to design joint country-driven multi-stakeholder programmes in capacity development;
- to encourage greater adaptability to local conditions through delegation and decentralization;
- to allow for longer and more flexible time horizons to accommodate a process approach;
- to enhance internal capacity through training and broadening skills in subjects related to capacity development - from mediation to environmental economics; and
- to devise new indicators for capacity development and develop new tools for building capacities.

VIII. A more cost-effective and rational organization of the meetings of the MEAs

34. The proliferation of the meetings of the Conference of the Parties, inter-sessional consultations and meetings of the Subsidiary Bodies on Scientific and Technical Advice are costly, inefficient and unsustainable. There are considerable savings to be realized by rationalizing and systematizing the various meetings held under the aegis of the MEAs. The prevailing situation with shortage of funds should also provide an impetus for developing a sound strategy for organizing these consultations.

35. The most obvious way is to host COPs of related conventions back to back in the same location. The most obvious costs are for conference facilities, which are usually covered by the host government. Additionally there are considerable costs borne by the participating delegates, observers and the media to cover airfares and accommodation. Finally, there are costs related to setting up temporary offices and communication infrastructure. Additionally there will almost certainly be cost savings for the secretariats by opting to pool resources when hosting two COPs back to back. Similarly, governments would be able to realise cost-efficiency gains by maintaining the same communications infrastructure for both conventions.

36. In addition, carefully planned back-to-back events would facilitate greater substantial crosscutting negotiations, and would probably weed out substantive contradictions or grey area issues that still exist within the international regime of international law.

37. A related issue is that of the participation of Ministers in these consultations. There is a growing dissatisfaction among Ministers of the Environment that they are not being properly utilized at these meetings and that the number of MEA meetings are increasingly becoming a burden on their time and work. This dilemma could be resolved by determining more specifically where and when the Ministers could be involved. Specific guidelines need to be issued about the necessity of the participation of the Ministers in the Meetings of the MEAs.
IX. Rationalization of Coordination Meetings among MEAs

38. The above proposal for a systematic approach for promoting collaboration and coordination among MEAs in itself should not become a burden for MEA secretariats and representatives by creating a layer of too many meetings on top of the regular meetings of MEAs. Annex 2 provides an idea of how heavy the schedule of MEAs meetings has become. In 2001 alone there are at least 40 major meetings of MEAs, without mentioning the numerous smaller workshops and meetings that are being held.

39. Annex 1 proposes a rationale calendar of meetings for implementing the systematic approach to promoting collaboration and coordination among MEAs provided in this paper, as well as deadlines for specific outputs. Greater use would be made of teleconferencing for meetings where desirable.

40. An overall calendar of MEA coordination meetings would need to be updated on a regular basis with a view to maintaining a realistic schedule of meetings.

*****
## Annex 1

### Calendar of Envisaged Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>TIMING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Meetings of the Bureau of Conference of the Parties of global MEAs</td>
<td>Annual meetings in December to take stock of COP decisions and activities of the year and to look at the likely decisions for the following year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Global meetings of regional seas conventions and action plans</td>
<td>Annual meetings in November for promoting cooperation, including linkages with global MEAs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Meetings of the subsidiary scientific and technical bodies of MEAs, including assessment panels (involving the Chairs of the bodies)</td>
<td>Annual meetings in connection with one of the COPs of MEAs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Meetings of the Interagency Coordination Group</td>
<td>Annual meetings in connection with the meetings of Environment Management Group (EMG).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Meetings on Coordination of MEA Secretariats</td>
<td>Annual Meetings early in the year (February/March).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. In-depth study on prospects for true synergies and bottlenecks</td>
<td>March - May 2001 (planning for the study and its Terms of Reference at the MEAs coordination meeting in Feb/Mar 2002).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Analyze the state of cooperation and collaboration among MEAs, including establishing an inventory of MOUs</td>
<td>UNEP to conduct the analysis in late 2001 to feed into the in-depth study (item 6 above).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Monitoring of decisions of MEAs</td>
<td>UNEP to put in place the necessary resources during 2002 and monitoring to start that year. The results will eventually feed into the meetings of the Bureau and the MEA secretariats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Development of environmental indicators for measuring MEA performance and achievements</td>
<td>A project concept to be drawn up during 2002 by UNEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Development of a website</td>
<td>A single entry point (home page) to be established for existing websites related to MEAs, based on the Conventions website of IUC and including MEAs Working Website. UNEP to work on this during 2001.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex 2

MEETINGS OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONVENTIONS, INCLUDING REGIONAL SEAS
CONVENTIONS AND ACTION PLANS

2001

1. Second Liaison Group on Agricultural Biodiversity (Rome, 24-26 January)
3. Ninth Coordination of Conventions Meeting (Nairobi, 11-12 February)
4. First Meeting of the Interim Scientific, Technical and Advisory Committee (ISTAC) to the
Protocol to the Cartagena Convention Concerning Pollution from Land-based Sources and
Activities in the Wider Caribbean Region and Regional Working Group of the Global
Programme of Action on Municipal Wastewater (Ocho Rios, Jamaica, 19-23 February)
5. African Regional Meeting on the Biosafety Clearing House and the Clearing House
Mechanism (Nairobi, 26-28 February)
6. SBSTTA 6 of CBD (Montreal, 12-16 March)
7. Second Meeting of the Panel of Experts on Access and Benefit Sharing (CBD) (Montreal,
19-22 March)
8. Second Meeting of the Interim Chemical Review Committee (ICRC) (Rome, 19-23 March)
9. Second Meeting of High-Level, Government-Designated Experts to Review the Draft
Convention and Draft Action Plan for the Northeast Pacific (Managua, 19-23 March)
10. 3rd SCBD/UNESCO Consultative Working Group of Experts on Biological Diversity
Education and Public Awareness (Bilbao, Spain, May, tentative)
11. POPs Diplomatic Conference (Stockholm, 21-23 May)
12. 14th Session of the subsidiary Bodies of the UNFCCC and possibly the resumed COP 6
(Bonn, 21 May-1 June)
13. 44th Meeting of the CITES Standing Committee (Paris, June)
14. Workshop on financial support for the creation and implementation of national biosafety
frameworks (Havana, 4-5 June)
15. Open-ended expert meeting to further develop proposals on the implementation of capacity
building provisions of the Protocol for consideration by the Intergovernmental Committee
for the Cartagena Protocol at its second meeting (Havana, 6-8 June)
16. Expert Meeting on Handling, Transport, Packaging and Identification of LMOs (CBD)
(Paris, 13-15 June)
17. International Conference on Genetically Modified Crop and Food Safety (Bangkok 10-12 July)

18. Open-ended Meeting of Experts on Capacity-building for the Implementation of the Biosafety Protocol (Havana, 11-13 July)


20. Workshop on Financing for Biodiversity (Havana, 15 July)

21. Resumed COP 6 of UNFCCC (Bonn, 16-27 July)

22. Third Meeting of High-Level, Government-Designated Experts to Review the Draft Convention and Draft Action Plan for the Northeast Pacific (Panama, 6-9 August)

23. Technical Experts Review Meeting of the Pilot Phase of the Biosafety Clearing House (Montreal, September, tentative)

24. COP 7 of CMS (Bonn, 11-15 September)

25. COP 5 of the UNCCD (Bonn, 17-28 September)

26. 7th Meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (Turkey, October)

27. Second Meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of the Cartagena Protocol (ICCP) (Nairobi, 1-5 October)

28. 8th Session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) of the Rotterdam Convention (Rome, 8-12 October)

29. MOP 13 of the Montreal Protocol (Colombo, 15-19 October)

30. COP 7 of the UNFCCC and SB 16 (Morocco, 29 October-9 November, to be confirmed)

31. 7th NOWPAP Intergovernmental Meeting (Russian Federation, November)

32. 12th Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (Monaco, 14-17 November)

33. SBSTTA 7 of CBD (Montreal, 12-16 November)

34. Open-ended Intersessional Meeting on the Strategic Plan, National Reports and Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (Montreal, 19-21 November)

35. 4th Global Meeting of Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (Montreal, 21-13 November)

36. 2001 Intergovernmental Review of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (Montreal, 26-30 November)

37. 26th Meeting of the Standing Committee of Ramsar (Gland, 3-7 December)

38. Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Emergency Protocol of the Barcelona Convention (end of year, to be decided)
39. 3\textsuperscript{rd} COP of the Nairobi Convention (Seychelles, Oct.-Nov., to be decided)

40. 6\textsuperscript{th} COP of the Abidjan Convention (Ghana, Oct.-Nov., to be decided)