

GPA IGR-2 HIGHLIGHTS:

WEDNESDAY, 18 OCTOBER 2006

On Wednesday morning, delegates at GPA IGR-2 met in plenary to hear a report of Tuesday's partnership workshops and discuss: the Progress Report for 2002-2006; Guidance for the Implementation of the GPA 2007-2011; UNEP/GPA Coordination Office Programme of Work 2007-2011; and the draft elements of the Beijing Declaration on furthering the implementation of the GPA. The Beijing Declaration working group met in the morning.

PLENARY

This session was chaired by Rejoice Mabudafhasi (South Africa).

REPORT OF THE PARTNERSHIP WORKSHOPS:

David Osborne (Australia) presented a report on the outcomes of Tuesday's 19 workshops, which he said were positive and constructive. Among successful examples of partnerships, he highlighted the information portal on waste management in SIDS, the partnership on marine litter, and the Memoranda of Understanding signed between Ramsar, the GPA, and the International Oceans Institute. As achievements, he noted the changing paradigm towards water management "from hilltops to oceans" and improved decision making. He underlined the call to take partnerships one step further by enhancing the exchange of experiences and lessons learned, and expanding the scope of current partnerships to issues such as land degradation. Osborne said partnerships have the potential to: engage stakeholders, including the general public; rally organizations in a more coordinated way; promote innovations and systematic cooperation; catalyze legal and institutional reform; generate political will; and enhance the GPA's regional effectiveness. He identified characteristics of good partnerships, including: having clarity of purpose and a common goal; being inspiring; creating synergies; and using pilot projects and clear performance measures. Delegates endorsed the report, which will be forwarded to the Ministerial Segment.

PROGRESS REPORT FOR 2002-2006: Veerle Vandeweerd, Coordinator, UNEP/GPA Coordination Office, presented the Report on Progress in Implementing the GPA at the International, Regional and National Levels in the Period 2002-2006 (UNEP/GPA/IGR.2/2), noting that the GPA's performance depends on governments' will to undertake tangible action.

ICELAND, CHINA and AUSTRALIA lauded the GPA's recent achievements, as well as its catalytic potential, through its partnerships, with ICELAND calling for a stronger emphasis on the long-term economic costs of inaction and AUSTRALIA stressing the importance of the GPA's flexibility.

THAILAND noted significant progress in Asia, including the development of national laws, strategies and action plans, and called for: building capacity of local government officials; assessing the financial sustainability of projects; raising awareness among policymakers and the public; and involving international and regional institutions, civil society, and the private sector.

PAKISTAN, CUBA, BRAZIL, MEXICO, NIGERIA, the REPUBLIC OF KOREA, BARBADOS and SRI LANKA described national policy-making initiatives, with PAKISTAN noting that NPAs should be mainstreamed at all levels of government and society, and suggesting that an IGR meeting be held every three years. The ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN proposed holding annual regional workshops to review GPA progress.

NORWAY, on behalf of the OSPAR Commission, reported on activities under the OSPAR Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic. He referred to achievements made by the European Commission and the North Sea Conferences, such as the EC Water Framework Directive and the EC Marine Strategy, and stressed the importance of the ecosystem approach.

BRAZIL expressed concern with the low representation of Latin American countries at IGR-2. MALDIVES stressed SIDS' vulnerability and lack of resources and capacity. GHANA called for harmonization of legal frameworks, as well as enhanced law enforcement, financial mechanisms, research and monitoring, capacity building, and public awareness and participation. GUATEMALA stressed the importance of cooperation for efficient use of financial support.

UNEP, on behalf of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), noted the complementarity between GPA and CBD work, as well as their Memorandum of Cooperation. He called for additional synergies, for instance with Ramsar and the Convention on Migratory Species. He highlighted recent achievements under the CBD that also benefit the GPA, including measurable targets on marine environmental protection agreed upon at CBD COP-8.

GUIDANCE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GPA 2007-2011: Vandeweerd introduced the Guidance to the Implementation of the GPA for 2007-2011: GPA Contribution to

the Internationally Agreed Goals and Targets for the Sustainable Development of Oceans, Coasts and Islands (UNEP/GPA/IGR.2/3), and invited States to make suggestions to enhance its usefulness.

BRAZIL stressed South-South cooperation, and SENEGAL underlined the importance of regional activities. SAUDI ARABIA stressed water security. The GLOBAL WATER PARTNERSHIP called for a stronger link between freshwater and oceans. MEXICO, supported by ICELAND and FRANCE, suggested emphasizing the ecosystem approach, in particular as it would link GPA implementation to development and sanitation issues. ICELAND proposed adding reference to specific implementation activities undertaken at the local level. CUBA called for education and institution strengthening. CHINA underlined developing countries' need for financial, technical and management capability support. MAURITIUS expressed hope that a focal point for SIDS at the GPA Coordination Office will be designated. The US supported the preparation of a similar guidance document for IGR-3.

UNEP/GPA COORDINATION OFFICE PROGRAMME OF WORK 2007-2011: Vandeweerd introduced the Proposed 2007 - 2011 Programme of Work of the UNEP/GPA Coordination Office (UNEP/GPA/IGR.2/4) and noted the Office's progress in becoming a catalyst to promote change, integrated processes, and partnerships.

Many speakers commended the work done by the GPA Coordination Office, and welcomed its proposed work programme.

MOROCCO highlighted several areas, including innovative financing mechanisms for developing countries, technology transfer, information dissemination, and monitoring. CANADA suggested introducing indicators for measuring results. The NETHERLANDS reaffirmed its support for hosting the Coordination Office in The Hague, and expressed preference for its activities to be conducted at a "medium" level of resources. JORDAN called for assistance to countries for their integration in GPA activities. FRANCE welcomed the emphasis on the national level.

UNEP said it will consider ways of promoting African National Plans of Action (NPAs) in the budgetary process. CHINA stressed the financing needs of developing countries, and proposed endorsing the work programme. SOUTH AFRICA emphasized capacity building. MEXICO referred to South-South cooperation, supported a "medium" level of resources, without additional funds channelled from the UNEP budget. The UK highlighted assessment work, capacity building and improving stakeholder cooperation. The US also underlined stakeholder engagement, proposed funding the Coordination Office at the "appropriate" level, asked it to prepare annual work plans, and agreed with Canada on performance indicators.

MAURITIUS recalled the Bali Strategic Plan on capacity building, proposed funding at the "appropriate" level, spoke of closer cooperation between the GPA and multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), and, supported by MALDIVES, called for establishing a SIDS focal point at the Coordination Office. The GLOBAL WATER PARTNERSHIP, supported by BARBADOS, called for greater cooperation with the freshwater community. CONGO proposed working closer together with the CBD on several GPA-related basin projects. PALAU referred to the vulnerability of SIDS. The ABIDJAN CONVENTION called for capacity building to deal with catastrophes in the region. AUSTRALIA suggested maintaining the focus on land-based sources, and supported performance indicators.

GPA Coordinator Vandeweerd responded to comments by delegates, and expressed appreciation for the proposed ideas. She welcomed continued support to the Coordination Office, as reiterated by the Netherlands, but pointed out that it is currently operating at a minimum budgetary level. She stated she would present an initial contribution on performance indicators to the next session of the UNEP Governing Council, to prepare a work plan for 2008-2009, and agreed on improving cooperation with MEAs, to avoid duplication.

The Programme of Work was approved by the meeting, with Chair Mabudafhasi noting that she would integrate the suggestions from the floor.

DRAFT ELEMENTS OF THE BEIJING DECLARATION ON FURTHERING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE

GPA: Working group Chair Mara Angélica Murillo Correa (Mexico) reported on the work of the Beijing Declaration working group. She said the group agreed to make the Declaration brief and action oriented, and examined suggestions from major groups and other stakeholders, as well as amendments proposed by delegations. She noted the group's spirit of compromise and consensus agreement of the draft. She said the Declaration called for, *inter alia*: enhancement of regional action; promotion of effective implementation of all conventions, agreements and protocols relevant to the achievement of the GPA's goals; availability of necessary financial resources; capacity building; promotion of participation of local and regional authorities and groups in developing and implementing strategies under the GPA; and close coordination with national integrated water resources management and water efficiency plans in developing and implementing NPAs. Delegates agreed to forward the draft Declaration to the Ministerial Segment for adoption.

BEIJING DECLARATION WORKING GROUP

The working group met in the morning to finalize the remaining contentious language in the draft Declaration. Outstanding issues included: preambular reference to climate-related natural disasters/climate change; and operative paragraphs on a call for ratification of agreements relevant to the GPA, and on increased application of the ecosystem approach. The group also considered new text on integration of NPAs and integrated resources water management and water efficiency plans. Compromise was reached on all these issues, with climate language accepted as suggested by Chair Murillo, which refers to the vulnerability of SIDS and other coastal areas to a rise in sea level and climate-related natural disasters. The reference to ratification was finally resolved in a breakout consultation of interested parties. Chair Murillo recorded the group's full agreement on the draft text shortly before the morning plenary.

IN THE CORRIDORS

After the successful Partnerships Day, Wednesday unfolded smoothly with no major controversies surfacing, while participants turned to the item on building a common agenda. Generally, delegates felt the partnerships presentations had been an enriching experience. They also praised the Beijing Declaration drafting group for concluding its work before the start of the Ministerial Segment. However, some negotiators seemed nostalgic for the excitement of heated debates and protracted late-night negotiations in other fora.

A delegate was heard commenting that the unusually swift progress of the meeting may be attributed to the low representation of civil society and the absence of the private sector, a fact for which no ready explanation was offered.