

Distr.
GENERAL

UNEP/EA.1/2/Add.2
DATE

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

**First session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of
the United Nations Environment Programme**

Nairobi, 23-27 June 2014

Item **XXXX** of the provisional agenda*

**UNEP/EA.1/2/Add.2 Report on the Implementation of decision 27/2: Contributions by the
regional ministerial environment forums for which UNEP serves as the Secretariat (27/2, OP15)
Report of the Executive Director**

Summary

The present report provides information on the implementation Paragraph 15 of Decision 27/2 of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Governing Council, which stresses the importance of the regional ministerial environment forums, and invites these forums to contribute to the work of the governing body of UNEP. The decision reaffirms the importance of the regional ministerial environment forums to promote increased coherence in international decision-making processes related to environment by facilitating consensus building on priority environmental issues at regional, sub-regional and inter-regional levels. The report gives a brief overview of UNEP's engagement with regional ministerial forums and their contribution to the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA).

The report shares suggested actions as a way forward for consideration by UNEA. For instance suggestions on how UNEP can strengthen the role of Regional Ministerial Forums in defining the environment agenda in each region and the role of Regional offices as well as clarify the links between the Regional Ministerial Forums and the UN Environment Assembly.

* UNEP/EA.1/1.

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I. Suggested Actions

1. The UN Environment Assembly is invited to consider measures by which UNEP can strengthen the role of Regional Ministerial Forums in defining the environment agenda in each region. Regional Ministerial Forums are also invited to consider measures to strengthen implementation of their decisions and other outcomes, led by governments in the regions with support from international organizations and funding partners, and based on modalities such as South-South and triangular cooperation.
2. More discussion and clarity would be desirable on the relationship between the Regional Ministerial Forums and UNEP, on issues such as (a) UNEP's assistance in the delivery of national/regional priorities (b) links between the Regional Ministerial Forums and the UN Environment Assembly, and (c) how the Forums can complement and benefit from the strengthening of UNEP's regional presence as called for in the Rio+20 outcome document, paragraph 88(g).
3. Call on regional ministerial environment forums for which the United Nations Environment Programme serves as secretariat, to contribute, as appropriate, to the outcomes of the United Nations Environment Assembly.
4. Regional Offices should continue to enhance the optimal utilization of the mechanisms under the regional forums as platforms for preparing and building common positions for the post-2015 development agenda and for integrating environmental sustainability in regions and sub-regions, through strategic and implementation measures and tools, including partnerships with sectors and communities of practice beyond the environment and coordinated actions within the UN system.
5. In the context of the implementation of the relevant Outputs in its Programmes of Work for 2014-2015 and beyond, UNEP will continue to engage with and provide support to regional and sub-regional forums so as to address regional environmental priorities and provide UNEP's overall strategic future direction particularly feeding into the design of the Medium Term Strategy and the subsequent development of the Programme Of Work.

II. BACKGROUND

6. The present report has been prepared pursuant to Decision 27/2 that seeks to implement paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and specifically to paragraph 15 of Decision 27/2 of the UNEP Governing Council, which "*Stresses the importance of the regional ministerial environment forums for which the United Nations Environment Programme serves as the secretariats, and invites these forums to contribute, as appropriate, to the work of the governing body of the United Nations Environment Programme*". It covers progress made in the implementation of the decision since the twenty-seventh session of the First Universal Session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum in February 2013.

7. Regional ministerial environment forums serve as consensus-building and decision-making processes at regional, sub-regional and inter-regional levels. They support the establishment of linkages between the regional and global environmental agendas. The forums also provide valuable opportunities for Member States to draw attention to national, regional, inter-regional and global environmental challenges, priorities and the linkage with sustainable development. These forums also discuss and review emerging issues, and identify opportunities for south-south and triangular cooperation. In essence, these forums act as platforms for preparing and building common positions for, *inter alia*, the United Nations Environment Assembly. In this regard, the forums have deliberated and reached consensus on key environment and sustainable development issues, such as, potential themes and topics for the first UNEA i.e. sustainable development goals and post-2015 development agenda, sustainable consumption and production, green economy, sustainable development of small island states, chemicals and waste among others.
8. Currently, UNEP serves as a secretariat to the following ministerial environmental forums - Africa Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN) and the Health and Environment Strategic Alliance (HESA); the Sub-regional Environmental Policy Dialogue (SEPD) of Asia and the Pacific and; the Regional Ministerial Environment and Health Forum in Southeast and East Asian Nations; the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean. It provides, where appropriate, administrative and logistical support to the Forums and their monitoring mechanisms (inter-sessional meetings); financial support in terms of facilitating participation of some member states, paying for consultancies etc; UNEP also provides financial management of some regional forums Trust Funds such as the AMCEN Trust Fund, the Trust Fund for the Environment Training Network of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean. It also provides technical and substantive support as well as preparation of relevant background information to enable the forums to consider and take informed decisions. UNEP is also part of the Joint Secretariat alongside United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA) and the League of Arab States (LAS) for the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE).
9. While this report concentrates on forums for which UNEP provides secretariat services, there are other equally important UNEP supported regional and subregional environmental forums which contribute to UNEP's programme of work as well as the agenda of UNEP's governing body. These forums include in Africa, the Africa Ministers Council on Water (AMCOW) and Conference of Energy Ministers of Africa (CEMA). In Asia and the Pacific, they are the Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development (Central Asia), the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development (MCED) in Asia, the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the South Asia Co-operative Programme (SACEP) and the Pacific Regional Environmental Environment Programme (SPREP). In Europe, there is, the Environment for Europe (EfE) process for which UNEP also works closely with its Secretariat provided by the UN European Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). The EfE process is the only pan-European Ministerial environmental forum. In the Gulf region, UNEP supports the Gulf Cooperation Council Environment Initiative. In the Americas, UNEP supports the Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD) and the Meeting of Ministers of Environment of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), and its Technical Subgroup 6 on Environment. In the Caribbean, UNEP works with and supports the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) of CARICOM, the Iberoamerican Forum of Ministers and its Network of Climate Change Offices and the Council of Ministers of the Mesoamerican Strategy of Environmental Sustainability (EMSA). Others include, the Andean Community of Nations (CAN), the Regional Forum on Environment and Health (Asia and Europe), the Small Island Developing States Regional forums among others.
10. During 2012-2013, UNEP's engagement with regional and sub-regional ministerial forums was anchored in the Environmental Governance sub-programme of its Programme of Work, in particular Expected Accomplishment (a), Output 6: *Effective policy exchange on environment and development issues is supported through regional ministerial and other intergovernmental forums and consultations; and expected accomplishment (c) Output 3: Regional and subregional institutional arrangements are further developed and strengthened to address transboundary environmental issues.* In this context, UNEP provided the requisite secretariat services, financial and technical support as well as facilitating the

convening of the forums. Furthermore, in the preparation of the Medium Term Strategy (MTS) for 2014-2017, analyzing regional environmental priorities as expressed by relevant regional forums was one of the key ways for incorporating regional priorities in UNEP's overall strategic future direction. The priorities were fed into the design of the MTS and the subsequent development of the Programme of Work for 2014-2015 and incorporated into relevant sub-programmes. Dedicated outputs aiming at strengthening of UNEP's engagement with regional forums were included, for instance, *"Support provided to effective policy exchange and political dialogues on environment and development issues through regional and sub-regional ministerial and other intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder forums and mechanisms"* (Output 3 of Expected Accomplishment (c) as well as *Institutional arrangements for the governance of shared natural resources and transboundary environmental issues (Output 6 of Expected accomplishment (a)* under the Environmental Governance sub-programme.

11. In all the regions UNEP works with relevant ministerial forums to advance the development agenda beyond 2015 and closely coordinates with the intergovernmental working processes tasked to design Sustainable Development Goals, as agreed at the Rio+20 Conference.

II. Progress of Work: Regional Forums for which UNEP is the Secretariat

Africa:

12. **Africa Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN)** was established in 1985 with the aim of providing guidance and direction on Environmental issues in the Africa Region. UNEP, through the Regional Office for Africa (ROA), serves as the secretariat of AMCEN and supports Africa in diverse fields such as desertification, climate change, green economy, law and institutions, chemicals management, sustainable consumption and production as well as developing common Africa positions in the global environment agenda. During the reporting period, UNEP has supported AMCEN in developing a common understanding as to how African countries could engage and contribute to UNEA. During the 5th special session of AMCEN held in October 2013, AMCEN adopted a decision calling for strengthening coherence and increased engagement between Member State diplomatic missions in Addis Ababa, Geneva, Nairobi and New York on sustainable development matters and mandated the African group of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP, in collaboration with African permanent missions in Addis Ababa, Geneva and New York, to prepare and advance a common strategy for Africa's engagement with UNEA. The decision also called upon African countries to ensure and promote the active participation of all relevant stakeholders, major groups and the private sector, especially from developing countries, drawing on the best practices of and models from other institutions and processes with the aim of achieving wider consultations, effective engagement and transparency in the work of the UNEA, with due regard to its intergovernmental character.
13. UNEP also supported AMCEN to develop Regional Flagship Programmes (clustered in five thematic areas that include: green economy, sustainable consumption and production, integrated environmental assessment, energy, and sustainable land management plus related cross-cutting areas) as a means to contribute to the effective implementation of the outcomes Rio +20 in Africa. The regional flagship programmes identified on the basis of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want". So far, draft concept notes for the respective flagship programmes and a draft regional flagship framework document for the regional flagship programmes have been developed. The 5th special session of AMCEN held in Gaborone Botswana from 15-18 October 2013 adopted a decision calling for the establishment of a steering committee within the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Planning and Coordinating Agency to guide the overall coherent development and implementation of the regional flagship programmes. UNEP as a member of the steering committee will continue to provide support in the development of the full programme documents of the regional flagship programmes and their subsequent implementation.

14. **The Health and Environment Strategic Alliance (HESA)** was created as a follow up to the first Inter-Ministerial Conference on Health and Environment in Africa held in Libreville, Gabon in 2008, where Ministers of Health and those of Environment adopted the Libreville Declaration aimed at catalyzing policy, institutional and investment changes required to reduce environmental threats to health. UNEP and WHO provides secretariat services to HESA. In order to effectively implement the Libreville Declaration, countries emphasized the need for relevant and up-to-date information. In this regard, UNEP together with WHO and other partners collaborated to produce the Third African Environment Outlook (AEO-3) report, focusing on health and environment inter-linkages. The report was launched on 17 October 2013 during the 5th special session of AMCEN in Gaborone, Botswana. The report offers a range of policies to better address the health and environmental challenges, and highlights opportunities and synergies that might be derived from intensified collaboration between the two sectors.

Asia and the Pacific:

15. **The Sub-regional Environmental Policy Dialogue (SEPD)** is a UNEP led initiative that draws on its five regions (Central Asia, Northeast Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the South Pacific) to provide consolidated Asia Pacific views on global environmental issues. UNEP, through the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) serves as the secretariat for the SEPD that covers all sub-regions. SEPD provides a forum to discuss global issues and to provide regional inputs to global events, such as UNEA, Multilateral Environment Agreements, Post 2015 Development Agenda among others as well as to advise and provide policy guidance to UNEP's programmes in Asia and the Pacific. During the reporting period, UNEP jointly with the Ministry of Environment of the Kingdom of Cambodia, organized the 10th meeting (SEPD-10), held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on 19 September 2013. Ministers, intergovernmental organizations, eminent personalities, civil society leaders, and UN Representatives from the four subregions (Northeast, South, Southeast and Pacific) of Asia and the Pacific region attended the meeting. UNEP prepared the background documents for the meeting and made relevant presentations. The meeting discussed emerging environmental issues in the region and crafted strategies for a regional response to strengthen environmental governance in light of the post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals, advancing the green economy and the 10 Year Framework Programme on sustainable consumption and production, and the implementation of the UNEP programme of work and the follow up to the Rio +20 outcomes.
16. **The Ministerial Regional Forum on Environment and Health in Southeast and East Asian Countries** is a cross sectoral political initiative that brings together national policy makers from the environment and health ministries of ASEAN countries and China, Japan, Republic of Korea, and Mongolia. It is serviced by a joint World Health Organization and UNEP Secretariat. The Third Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health was held from 9-10 September 2013 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The event was hosted by the Government of Malaysia and opened by the Prime Minister of Malaysia, with participants from Ministries of Environment and Ministries of Health from Southeast in attendance, in addition to other relevant international organizations. A Kuala Lumpur Declaration was adopted where governments committed, inter alia, to develop an environment and health capacity development programme, strengthen transboundary and cross border cooperation and also to strengthen national environment and health action plans.

Europe:

17. In April 2013, UNEP was requested to provide Secretariat services to the **Pan European Biodiversity Platform** (formerly known as Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy - PEBLDS), which

is expected to be formalized this year to support the implementation of UNEP Governing Council Decisions UNEP/GC/27/21 and UNEP/GCSS.XII/32.

Latin America and the Caribbean:

18. **The Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean** is the region's most representative and long standing political gathering on environmental policies and responses, as established by the Environment Ministers of the region in 1985. UNEP, through the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC), hosts the Secretariat of this forum. During the reporting period, UNEP supported the inter-sessional meeting of the Forum held in Quito, Ecuador from 2-3 April 2013. The Forum discussed the new scenario of governance for sustainable development including the ways to strengthen it and reviewed the Latin America and the Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development within the context of the processes originated in Rio +20. The Nineteenth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean will take place in Los Cabos, Mexico from 11-14 March 2014. This Forum will facilitate ministerial dialogues on the First Session of UNEA, the follow up of agreements reached at Rio +20, the post-2015 agenda and the sustainable development goals and cooperation on climate change, biodiversity and chemicals and wastes. In preparation for this meeting and to obtain consensus on the issues that are priority for the countries, a meeting of the Bureau of the Forum of Ministers of Environment will be held in Mexico from 11-12 February 2014.
19. UNEP also supported the meetings of the working groups and networks established by the Forum of Ministers, namely: the Working Group of the Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development (ILAC) on Indicators, the Regional Network of Experts on Atmospheric Pollution, the Environmental Training Network and the Regional Council of Government Experts on Sustainable Consumption and Production. These groups and networks meet during the year to feed into the process of the Forum by presenting proposals, recommendations, and action plans for approval of the Ministers. From 28-30 October 2013 there was a meeting of the Intergovernmental Network of Experts on Air Pollution in Mexico City. In accordance with the mandate of the Eighteenth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean held in Quito, Ecuador in February 2012, a draft Regional Intergovernmental Plan of Action for the Cooperation in the Field of Air Pollution for Latin America and the Caribbean will be submitted for consideration and possible adoption at the Nineteenth Meeting. The drafted Regional Plan of Action provides guidelines for the short, medium and long term in order to reduce air pollution and its health impacts in the region, and contribute to the mitigation of climate change at the local, regional and global levels.

West Asia:

20. **The Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE)** is the regional mechanism to maintain coordination and cooperation among Arab countries in all matters related to environment and sustainable development and is a part of the League of Arab States (LAS). UNEP supports CAMRE and its programming arm, the Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR) in which UNEP, through the Regional Office for West Asia (ROWA) is part of the Joint Secretariat alongside United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA) and LAS. During this period, UNEP supported discussions on the follow-up on the outcomes of Rio+20 and the post-2015 development agenda; the Regional Implementation Meeting in preparation for the final session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and possible regional initiatives to complement the elaboration of sustainable development goals (SDGs). UNEP is also working in early 2014 in support of the regional preparations for the High Level Political Forum in July with UNESCWA and LAS.