

FP/1002-74-52



UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME
ENVIRONMENT ASSESSMENT PROGRAMME

MEETING REPORTS
UNEP/EAP.MR/95-7

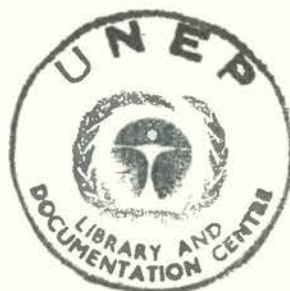
**Second Meeting of the
Earthwatch Working Party**

22 - 23 March, 1995, Geneva, Switzerland



Second Meeting of the Earthwatch Working Party

22 - 23 March, 1995, Geneva, Switzerland



4 E 3 4

UNEP/EAP (1995). Second Meeting of the Earthwatch Working Party
22-23 March, 1995, Geneva, Switzerland
UNEP/EAP.MR/95-7
Environment Assessment Programme
United Nations Environment Programme
P.O. Box 30552, Nairobi, Kenya

TABLE OF CONTENTS

REPORT OF THE MEETING

●	Progress Report	1
●	Earthwatch Programme Document	2
●	Activities to Implement Earthwatch	2
●	Global Observing Systems	4
●	Development Watch	4
●	Participation of Governments, NGOs and the Scientific Community	4
●	Other Business	5
ANNEX 1:	List of Participants	7
ANNEX 2:	Agenda	11

EARTHWATCH WORKING PARTY 2

(Geneva, 22-23 March 1995)

REPORT OF THE MEETING

1. The second meeting of the Earthwatch Working Party was convened by UNEP at its offices in Geneva on 22-23 March 1995, with Earthwatch focal points and other representatives of agencies and organizations of the UN system in attendance (see Annex 1). The meeting was opened by the Assistant Executive Director, Division of Environmental Assessment, UNEP, who noted the improvements in system-wide Earthwatch coordination and the need now to give the process more substance. He also described the new programme of UNEP built around four issues: sustainable management and use of natural resources, sustainable production and consumption, a better environment for human health and wellbeing, and globalization and the environment, as well as global and regional servicing and support. These would be covered by three response areas in the organization: environmental assessment, policy/legal matters, and environmental management, in a matrix. There will be discussions with the agencies to review the implications of the new programme. Some questions were asked about the place of Earthwatch in the new programme, and the way that agencies that have long cooperated with UNEP will relate to it.

2. The working party approved the provisional agenda (see Annex 2), and invited Mr. Jeff Tschirley of FAO to chair the meeting. It was agreed to work informally and by consensus.

Agenda item 3: Progress Report

3. The Coordinator, UN System-wide Earthwatch, presented a report on progress since the last meeting of the Working Party (UNEP/EWWP2/WP.1). He also referred to the coming reviews of Earthwatch at the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) in April and the UNEP Governing Council (GC) in May. The documents prepared for those reviews were available for consideration at the meeting. These included the report of the Secretary-General on Chapter 40: Information for Decision-making and Earthwatch, prepared jointly by DPCSD and UNEP for the third session of the CSD, the ACC Report to the UNEP Governing Council 1995 on International Cooperation in the Field of the Environment on "the United Nations System-wide Earthwatch", the report of the Executive Director to the UNEP Governing Council on "Earthwatch, environment monitoring and assessment" (UNEP/GC.18/4), and the draft UN System-wide Earthwatch Programme Document (UNEP/EWWP2/WP.2). He highlighted the programme document as a summary of all the system-wide activities contributing to Earthwatch, and the need to fill the gaps in its coverage and to make continuing use of the assembled information for joint programming and for improving access to Earthwatch information and activities of all the partners.

4. The Working Party emphasized the guidance provided by the ACC in its recommendation to the UNEP Governing Council concerning "the role of UNEP to provide leadership and direction to the United Nations system-wide Earthwatch, to support inter-agency coordination of observation, assessment and reporting activities, and to assist in the joint programming and integration of results that will make Earthwatch an effective effort of the United Nations system to provide international environmental information required for decision-making."

5. The importance of Earthwatch was recognized as a mechanism to build bridges between organizations, including convention secretariats. It should help to identify areas for cooperation, and assist smaller bodies that did not have all of the information-handling resources available to larger organizations.

6. With reference to the policy issue of access to environmental information raised in the ACC report, this was already a major issue for discussion that required distinct solutions for different

types of data. Other fora such as CODATA were also discussing these issues, so that there was no need for the Earthwatch Working Party to become involved, while awaiting the Governing Council response to the ACC proposal for an ad hoc group of governmental experts on the question. It was pointed out that we first need a statement of principles concerning information generation and exchange among the agencies of the UN system, where there are sometimes inconsistencies even within agencies in access to information. The working party recommended that a meeting of the key responsible people within the organizations should be organized to discuss the issue of data access between organizations.

7. DPCSD described the Task Force established by the IACSD and headed by UNDP to look at all the information and reporting requirements for countries from conventions, programmes and activities across the system, to identify duplication and the potential for streamlining, and to propose an integrated framework for data collection at the national level.

Agenda item 4: Earthwatch Programme Document

8. The draft Earthwatch programme document was widely appreciated as a useful summary of the activities of the whole UN system. A number of gaps were identified. Additional convention secretariats should be contacted, and the secretariat was encouraged to follow up with the agencies that had not yet responded, so that the document would be as complete and accurate as possible. It should be seen as an evolving tool for Earthwatch planning and programming, to be improved in format, kept up to date and made widely available in both printed and electronic forms. Some graphs or diagrams might help to show the relationships among all of the components. Some care was also needed not to give an impression of overlap of activities, when in general they were complementary and often closely coordinated. It also should be made clear in Table 1 that agencies have listed only their information activities, and not all of their involvement in the programme areas of Agenda 21.

9. It was agreed to make a shortened version available as a back-of-the-room document at the CSD, and the full document available at the UNEP Governing Council, with a note indicating that the compilation of information was still in progress and that there were gaps yet to be filled. The partners were preparing additional material, which would be provided as soon as possible, even if it could be only incorporated in further revisions after the Governing Council.

Agenda items 5 and 6: Activities to implement Earthwatch

10. Various proposals for initial outputs from the system-wide Earthwatch were reviewed. There was considerable interest in the idea of Earthwatch Alerts as suggested by the secretariat, although the name should be changed to reflect the more policy-oriented content as agreed. Issues must be carefully selected for their importance to policy-makers beyond the constituency of any one agency, which would benefit from wider exposure, and these should be agreed by consultation (preferably electronic), among the members of the Working Party. They should be limited to two pages in length, emphasizing the policy relevance of the issue, with a common format to identify them as an Earthwatch output while clearly showing the originating agency responsible for the content. Each one would be prepared by an initiating agency (or inter-agency activity) in cooperation with UNEP, and UNEP was requested to take responsibility for the subsequent production and distribution. The ACC recommendations to the Governing Council should help in convincing UNEP to provide the necessary resources. Agencies which felt that an issue was important to their constituency were encouraged to assist in distribution within their own networks. The potential for distribution to the non-governmental constituency, and for use of electronic media, was also emphasized. It was agreed to experiment with the idea through the preparation of one or a few initial issues. FAO agreed to prepare one on fisheries. Other issues that were considered of the appropriate type for this treatment were water quality in rivers (WHO), forestry assessments (FAO) and air quality in megacities (WHO), and more would certainly be identified as the year progressed.

11. The programme document as completed and improved would be another major output of this phase of Earthwatch, with wide printed and electronic distribution.

12. The information assembled by the secretariat should become the core of a World Wide Web site for Earthwatch which UNEP has offered and should manage. This site should provide a central point of access to system-wide Earthwatch information, allowing users to interconnect with sites or gophers maintained by each agency where their data relevant to Earthwatch could be posted and consulted. The secretariat should prepare proposals for the Earthwatch home page and the means of linking to the various agency sources, including paths of access by agency and by topic. Organizations that did not yet have their own electronic access point could provide the necessary information for posting at UNEP's site, with assistance from UNEP if necessary. Otherwise data should be held and managed by the originating agency, as this was the best way to ensure responsibility for data quality and updating. It was important for Earthwatch to become recognized as an easy and reliable point of access to the environmental and sustainable development information held by the UN system. It should demonstrate the transparency of data collection and assessment activities and encourage the use of information by governments, scientists, non-governmental organizations and the public. The posting of social and economic as well as environmental information would facilitate the linkage of these aspects of sustainability as recommended by the ACC. The Earthwatch site could also give access to electronic conferences on particular issues of concern to Earthwatch, such as a number already operating in sustainable agriculture. UNEP should take responsibility for the home page, and each agency for its own site and information. Cooperating organizations should provide their site addresses and contents to the secretariat in their updates submitted for the programme document. Further discussion may be needed on access to data held by cooperating organizations and government agencies outside the UN system.

13. It was agreed that there was no need for any major new synthesis report from the system-wide Earthwatch, apart from those that already existed and the new Global Environmental Outlook being planned by UNEP. The possibility of compiling short digests of various sectoral reports contributing to Earthwatch might be worth exploring further.

14. With reference to harmonization, standardization and quality control, it was felt that coordination of these activities should be demand driven, and that there was already adequate cooperation in this area within the system. Those organizations with extensive experience in these fields would welcome making it available. If any partners felt a specific need in this area, then an ad hoc response could be organized.

15. The group recognized the importance of involvement of governments in Earthwatch, both because of the need for their support in providing data and funding, and because government involvement in the assessment of critical issues identified in Earthwatch would be necessary to bring the scientific and political dimensions together and to demonstrate transparency. However, it agreed that consideration of establishing a government-nominated expert group for Earthwatch should wait for an appropriate time after the reviews in the CSD and the UNEP Governing Council. The terms of reference for such a group would need to be devised carefully.

16. On the potential for participatory observations and the proposal from the secretariat for an Earthwatch 2000 Campaign, this was seen as a long-term issue rather than an immediate priority for Earthwatch. Such participation is already essential in meteorology, but data quality control, preferably at the local level, was critical. Volunteers must want to make the observations, not be required to participate as in school classes, where quality declined accordingly. The participatory approach was most appropriate at the local and national levels, and this was the recommendation in the Chapter 40 report. The Earthwatch partners might have a role in methodology development and quality control, and they were encouraged to explore what specific data needs might benefit

from this approach. UNEP might survey what is already being done in participatory information collection, with special attention to quality control. This could then be considered again in the medium term.

17. All agencies were already supporting the Programme of Work on Indicators for Sustainable Development prepared by DPCSD for the CSD. While it was recognized that additional environmental indicators might well be required for Earthwatch, the indicators now being developed should also be used in Earthwatch outputs. This was all that could be managed at the moment; further cooperation on indicators in the framework of Earthwatch could be considered in the medium term, based on the results of the DPCSD programme.

18. With respect to funding proposals and a fund-raising strategy, it was felt that it was important for Earthwatch to present a rational programme where the activities of all the agencies fit together, in order to encourage some incremental funding increases or support to specific key inter-agency activities. Proposals could also be developed for specific donors.

Agenda item 7: Global observing systems

19. Various participants provided updates on the status of the global observing systems, including the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS), the Global Terrestrial Observing System (GTOS), the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) and some sectoral systems such as the Global Observing System of World Weather Watch, the World Hydrological Cycle Observing System, the Global Atmosphere Watch, etc. These systems were key pillars for Earthwatch, providing some of the critical data on which Earthwatch assessments need to be based. The cooperative linkages between the systems are strong, with joint panels already established between GCOS and GOOS, and GCOS and GTOS, and another planned between GTOS and GOOS. With the problem of raising funds for such systems, all are emphasizing an initial phase based on existing components, but their extension to new sites or new measurements will require major sources of support that have yet to be identified.

Agenda item 8: Development Watch

20. DPCSD reported on the status of proposals for Development Watch as discussed at an expert meeting last December and included in the Chapter 40 report to the CSD. The meeting proposed that Development Watch would focus on policy-oriented assessment of sustainability at the national level, while Earthwatch is concerned with the regional and global levels. If the CSD agrees to the concept, there will need to be more discussions on the interface between Earthwatch and Development Watch.

Agenda item 9: Participation of governments, NGOs and the scientific community

21. The Working Party discussed the stimulation of government participation and support, and the involvement of the scientific community and non-governmental organizations in Earthwatch. It was agreed to begin including in the programme document information on NGO and governmental activities supporting the Earthwatch process, including ICSU, SCOPE, WRI, WWF, IUCN, the New Economics Foundation, etc. NGOs are both users and suppliers of environmental information, and will be very helpful in the wider distribution of Earthwatch outputs.

22. The relationship with the scientific community should be more dynamic, with Earthwatch helping to define research agendas, and interfacing between research and policy-making. ICSU and its subsidiary programmes and HDP will be important partners here. Input useful for research agendas could also be posted on the World Wide Web site.

23. The links with governments should primarily concern those activities they are undertaking for the international community, beyond the national scope that will be more pertinent to Development Watch. Governments are likely to be primary users of Earthwatch outputs.

Other business

24. It was agreed that the next meeting of the Earthwatch Working Party would be held in September-October in Geneva, at a date to be arranged by the secretariat. The agenda should include progress on the decisions taken at this meeting, the results of the CSD and GC consideration of Earthwatch and Development Watch, and the progress of the task force on reporting requirements.

25. The report of the meeting was reviewed and adopted.

26. The meeting was closed at 11:45 on 23 March 1995.

ANNEX 1

EARTHWATCH WORKING PARTY 2 (Geneva, 22-23 March 1995)

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

UNITED NATIONS

HABITAT Mr Lars Ludvigsen
Human Settlements Officer
UNCHS (Habitat) Geneva Office
Room E 6.1
Palais des Nations
1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
Tel: +41 22 907 46 83
Fax: +41 22 907 00 33

UNDPCSD Mrs Mary Pat Williams Silveira
Senior Officer, HDIT Branch
Division for Sustainable Development
Department for Policy Coordination
and Sustainable Development
United Nations
2 UN Plaza - Room DC2-2250
New York, N.Y. 10017, USA
silveira@un.org
Tel: +212 963 84 28
Fax: +212 96312 67

Mr Michael Monaghan
Senior Programme Officer
Division for Sustainable Development
Geneva Executive Center
1219 Châtelaine, Geneva
Switzerland
MMonaghan.unfccc@unep.ch
Tel: +41 22 979 94 21
Fax: +41 22 979 90 32

UNFPA Mr R. El-Heneidi
Director
UNFPA Liaison Office
Geneva Executive Center
1219 Châtelaine, Geneva
Switzerland
Tel: +41 22 979 95 72
Fax: +41 22 979 90 16

Ms Mari Sasaki
Junior Programme Officer
UNFPA Liaison Office
Geneva Executive Center
1219 Châtelaine, Geneva
Switzerland
Tel: +41 22 979 95 70
Fax: +41 22 979 90 16

UNEP

Mr Harvey Croze
Assistant Executive Director
Division of Environmental Assessment
UNEP Headquarters
P.O. Box 30552
Nairobi
Kenya

harvey.croze@unep.no
Tel: +2542 623 511
Fax: +2542 623 943

Mr Arthur Dahl
Coordinator
UN System-wide Earthwatch
UNEP
Case postale 356
1219 Châtelaine, Geneva
Switzerland

Tel: +41 22 979 92 07
Fax: +41 22 797 34 71
adahl@unep.ch

Mr C.C. Wallen
UNEP Consultant
c/o WMO
Case postale 2300
1211 Geneva
Switzerland

Tel: +41 22 730 82 59
Fax: +41 22 740 14 39

AGENCIES

FAO

Mr J.B. Tschirley
Senior Officer
Environment and Sustainable Development Unit
FAO
Via delle Terme di Caracalla
00100 Rome
Italy

jeff.tschirley@fao.org
Tel: +396 5225 5088/4314
Fax: +396 5225 3369

IAEA

Mr H.S. Cherif
Special Assistant to the Director General
International Atomic Energy Agency
P.O. Box 100
1400 Vienna
Austria

Tel: +43 1 23 60
Fax: +43 1 23 45 64

Ms Merle Opelz
Head
International Atomic Energy Agency
Office at Geneva
1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Tel: +41 22 917 29 71
Fax: +41 22 917 00 6

IOC

Mr Alexandre P. Metalnikov
IOC Second Vice-Chairman
c/o INC/UNFCCC Secretariat
15 chemin des Anémones
1219 Châtelaine, Geneva
Switzerland

ametalnikov.unfccc@unep.ch
Tel: +41 22 979 95 09
Fax: +41 22 979 90 34

WHO

Mr G. Ozolins
Director
Division of Operational Support in
Environmental Health
WHO
20 Avenue Appia
1211 Geneva 27
Switzerland

Tel: +41 22 791 37 58
Fax: +41 22 791 07 46

Mrs S. Manegrier
Food Safety
WHO
20 Avenue Appia
1211 Geneva 27
Switzerland

WMO

Mr Michel Jarraud
Deputy Secretary-General
World Meteorological Organization
41 avenue Giuseppe-Motta
Case postale 2300
CH-1211 Geneva 2
Switzerland

Tel: +41 22 730 81 11
Fax: +41 22 734 23 26

Mr Harold Kibby
World Meteorological Organization
41 avenue Giuseppe-Motta
Case postale 2300
1211 Geneva 2
Switzerland

Mr Alexander Soudine
World Meteorological Organization
41 avenue Giuseppe-Motta
Case postale 2300
1211 Geneva 2
Switzerland

Mr Hamish McCombie
World Meteorological Organization
41 avenue Giuseppe-Motta
Case postale 2300
1211 Geneva 2
Switzerland

Secretariat for the Basel Convention

Mrs Iwona Rummel-Bulska
Coordinator
Secretariat for the Basel Convention
P.O. Box 356
1219 Châtelaine, Geneva
Switzerland

Tel: +41 22 979 92 13
Fax: +41 22 797 34 54

Secretariat for the Convention on Biological Diversity

Mr Manab Chakraborty
Senior Officer (Economist)
Secretariat for the Convention
on Biological Diversity
P.O. Box 356
1219 Châtelaine, Geneva
Switzerland

m.chakraborty@smtpunep.unep.ch
Tel : +4122 979 93 64
Fax : +4122 797 25 12

Interim Secretariat for the Framework Convention on Climate Change

Mr Michael Monaghan
Senior Programme Officer
Division for Sustainable Development
Geneva Executive Center
1219 Châtelaine, Geneva
Switzerland

MMonaghan.unfccc@unep.ch
Tel: +41 22 979 94 21
Fax: +41 22 979 90 32

ANNEX 2

EARTHWATCH WORKING PARTY 2 (Geneva, 22-23 March 1995)

AGENDA

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Approval of the agenda and adoption of working procedures
3. Report by the Secretariat on progress since the last meeting, and on the coming reviews of Earthwatch at the Commission for Sustainable Development (April 1995) and the UNEP Governing Council (May 1995)
4. Review of the in-depth study of Earthwatch and the draft Earthwatch programme document
5. Proposed activities for the implementation of Earthwatch recommended at the last meeting:
 - a. strategy for distribution of Earthwatch outputs
 - b. proposed outputs, including Earthwatch alerts
 - c. funding proposals and a fund-raising strategy
 - d. use of electronic networks
 - e. harmonization, standardization and quality control
 - f. strategies to improve data access
 - g. government-nominated expert group for Earthwatch
6. New proposed activities:
 - a. potential for participatory observations
 - b. further cooperation on indicators for Earthwatch
 - c. other proposals from participants
7. The global observing systems
8. Status of proposals for Development Watch
9. Stimulation of government participation and support, and involvement of the scientific community and non-governmental organizations
10. Other business
11. Date, venue of next meeting
12. Adoption of the report of the meeting
13. Closing of the meeting