

**Presentation at the opening of the UNFCCC workshop on synergies between Rio Conventions,
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Thank you very much, Madame Chair.

UNEP is very pleased to be part of this important workshop. And we thank the Secretariat of the UNFCCC particularly Janos Pasztor for inviting us to this meeting.

We thank you Madame Chair for your leadership.

We find the objectives of this workshop to be focussed, well articulated and in line with our own work and thinking. I refer here to the achievement of synergies in the areas of food security, water resources and ecosystems. I also refer to the enhancement of coordination and communication between the Conventions at the national level in areas such as capacity building, reporting, technology transfer - to name just a few.

As you are aware, UNEP has a particular sense of kinship with the Rio Conventions. At the same time we are aware of the autonomous legal nature of the Conventions and its bodies. We also understand the importance of their implementation at the national level.

UNEP's role in country-level coordination, especially in the area of capacity-building, was underscored at the Seventh Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council. This was endorsed by the World Summit in the context of international environmental governance

Madame Chair, UNEP recognized very early the importance and value of cooperation and coordination between the conventions and international organizations focusing on environmental matters. In this regard, UNEP took the lead from the Chapter 38 of Agenda 21. Subsequently, UNEP's Governing Council in its decision 17/25 of 21 May 1993 requested the Executive Director to continue to promote the coherent coordination of the functioning of environmental conventions, including their Secretariats, with a view to improving effectiveness of the implementation of the conventions.

The nine coordination meetings of the Secretariats since March 1994 are a proof of our continuing efforts at identifying programmatic synergies between the conventions and improving co-operation between the Conventions' secretariats and respective programmes of UNEP.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We would like to recall UNEP's landmark report **Protecting our Planet, Securing our Future, Linking Environmental Issues with Human Needs: Opportunities for Strategic Interventions"**. This report explored in detail the scientific and policy synergy among the Rio conventions. I would like to quote a passage from this volume that is very relevant to our proceedings here.

The importance of global environmental issues--such as climate change, loss of biological diversity, stratospheric ozone depletion, deforestation, and water degradation--to poverty alleviation and development is now becoming more fully recognized. However, these global environmental issues are, to a large extent, normally thought of as isolated issues by both the scientific and policy communities. As a result, they often fail to adequately recognize that there are strong scientific and policy interlinkages among the global environmental issues, between global environmental issues and local and regional environmental issues, and between environmental issues and basic human needs--adequate food, clean water, energy services, and a healthy environment. If these global environmental issues are to be addressed within a more holistic and synergistic policy framework, it is essential to gain an improved understanding of the scientific and policy interlinkages among them and how they influence our ability to meet basic human needs.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The adoption of UNEP Governing Council decision on International Environmental Governance and its later endorsement by WSSD is significant. I refer in particular to the section on MEAs. It states its objective as being *“enhancing synergies and linkages between MEAs with comparable areas of focus or of a regional character”*.

I would now like to give a short summary of the work that UNEP is doing to support the environmental conventions at the programmatic level to achieve synergies:

First, harmonization projects for national reporting

UNEP is facilitating pilot projects in four countries (Ghana, Indonesia, Panama and Seychelles) to test information management and harmonization concepts in the context of the national reporting to the five global biodiversity-related conventions (CBD, CITES, CMS, Ramsar and WHC). The special focus is on institutional co-ordination mechanisms and interlinkages at national and international levels.

Second, work on enforcement and compliance guidelines

UNEP's Governing Council adopted Guidelines on Compliance and Enforcement of Multilateral Environmental Agreements at Cartagena in February 2001. This decision called upon UNEP to facilitate implementation of the Guidelines and to advance capacity building efforts in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. To implement this decision, UNEP has developed a draft training manual. We will hold a series of regional training workshops on compliance and enforcement of MEAs. These workshops will be designed to facilitate feedback on the draft manual, which will be revised by the addition of regional annexes. .

Third, capacity building initiatives

UNEP has under taken a major initiative to train customs officials with the Secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements that have trade provisions, such as the Basel Convention, CITES, and the Montreal Protocol in cooperation with the World Customs Organization, at both the national and regional levels. Customs officer training is also

anticipated to be an important element of the national implementation of the Rotterdam Convention and the Stockholm Convention once they enter into force.

Fourth, enhancement of synergies and mutual supportiveness among trade and environmental policies, rules and institutions

Five meetings have been held since 1999. And they have brought together the Secretariats of the World trade Organizations, MEAs and UNEP. These meetings have focused on unrealized opportunities to make MEAs and WTO Agreements work together more effectively in pursuit of sustainable development.

Fifth Policy development and implementation.

As an example, UNEP is promoting linkages between the Convention on Biological Diversity and forestry projects in the Clean Development Mechanism.

Sixth, Information and capacity-building

Many of UNEP's *capacity-building* activities involve expert workshops. A recent workshop on climate change and agricultural productivity held in New Delhi explored the science of adaptation and potential options. Other activities involve supporting the National Action Plans for least developed countries and developing an enabling environment for the transfer of environmentally sustainable technologies. In addition, UNEP is promoting training and institution-building in 12 developing countries that want to implement CDM projects.

UNEP is also producing a special synthesis report bringing together the main implications of the Third Report of the Global Environmental Outlook for the 5 main MEA clusters. The audience includes key party actors in MEAs as well as the Secretariats. UNEP has also published a booklet on "Conventions and Corals" detailing the interests of about 20 MEAs and related organizations in coral reefs.

UNEP also works closely with the secretariat of the Climate Change Convention on generating *public awareness* of the Convention and its objective through the media and information services. We collaborate with the secretariat on promoting Article 6 on Education, Training and Public Awareness.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We believe that outreach in Africa may have its greatest impact, and be most cost-effective, if it addresses all three Rio conventions (Article 13 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Article 6 of the Convention on Climate Change, and Article 19 of the Convention to Combat Desertification) simultaneously. Not only are African countries the primary focus of the Desertification treaty, but they are among the most vulnerable to climate change. Africa is also biodiversity-rich and depends on biodiversity for many economic and social benefits. Many policies and measures – reforestation, preservation of wetlands and other vulnerable ecosystems, improved agricultural

practices, increased monitoring, use of renewable energy resources – can simultaneously promote the goals of all three conventions.

To examine the validity of such an approach, UNEP could consider presenting a proposal to this effect to three convention secretariats for their guidance. The proposal will focus on how to implement the information needs of the three Rio conventions synergistically at the national level.

Madame Chair,

We are launching a major project on achieving synergies between conventions in Africa very shortly. Funding for the project has been secured. Its objective will be implementation of the various activities mentioned in the WSSD recommendation on ***“improved coordination among and effectiveness of multilateral environmental agreements”***. The project will be implemented in 7 –8 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa including two Small Island Developing States (SIDS). We will be writing to the MEA secretariats requesting for their advice on the activities for the project. We will also solicit the cooperation of the MEAs in making this project a success.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

This important workshop comes at an important juncture. It is a crucial part of the process leading to the implementation of the WSSD Plan of Implementation. UNEP strongly believes that sustainable development cannot be achieved by a single institution. Our focus therefore must be on synergies in existing environmental institutions to deliver on sustainable development objectives. We believe that the momentum created by Johannesburg should be fully used for this purpose.

Thank you very much