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ADVISORY GROUP ON ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCIES

6<sup>th</sup> Meeting

Geneva, 22-24 June 2005

## **REPORT OF THE SIXTH MEETING OF AGEE**

This document is divided into three parts:

- Introduction
- Summary of discussions
- Conclusions and recommendations

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The sixth meeting of the Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies (AGEE) was convened jointly by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in collaboration with the UNEP Awareness and Preparedness at Local Level (APELL) programme at the Palais des Nations in Geneva on 22-24 June 2005, in accordance with the recommendations of the fifth meeting of the AGEE.

The sixth AGEE meeting was attended by delegations from Armenia, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, France, Ghana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Jamaica, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Maldives, Morocco, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, Romania, Russian Federation, Senegal, Serbia and Montenegro, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey, United States of America, and Yemen.

The meeting was also attended by representatives from the following United Nations entities: International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN Habitat), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Secretariat of the Basel Convention, United Nations Office for Humanitarian Affairs and UNOSAT. Other international and national organizations and associations attending, included the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW); International Civil Defense Organization (ICDO), the French Institute National de l'Environnement Industriel et des Risques (INERIS), non-governmental organizations and councils – IUCN/The World Conservation Union, CARE, World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF), World Water Council (WWC), the International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM). Academia representatives from Canada, France and Romania, a consultant from Switzerland, observers from France, Sweden, United States of America, private sector representatives of DOW and the French Bureau de recherches géologiques et minières (BRGM) also attended the meeting.

## II. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

Ms. Yvette Stevens, UN Assistant Emergency Relief Coordinator and Director, OCHA Geneva, opened the meeting. She welcomed this second joint AGEE/APELL meeting and drew attention to ongoing efforts of the two organizations to link awareness and prevention to the response phase of disaster management. She highlighted the successful integration efforts of OCHA and UNEP through the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit (Joint Environment Unit). She stressed that improvements can and must always be made to any organization, and supported the emphasis in the AGEE agenda on activities to strengthen the Joint Environment Unit. She also noted that UNEP and OCHA are engaged in ongoing discussions to determine how to strengthen their collaboration through the Joint Environment Unit.

Mr. Gerhard Putman-Cramer, Deputy Director, Natural Disaster Policy and Chief of OCHA's Emergency Services Branch, read a welcome letter from Mr. Jan Egeland, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. In his letter, Mr. Egeland noted, in particular, the support and guidance role of the AGEE, which is vital in ensuring the Joint Environment Unit's successful role in mobilizing and coordinating international assistance to countries affected by environmental emergencies and natural disasters with major environmental impacts.

Ms. Monique Barbut, Director of UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE) welcomed the participants on behalf of UNEP and the APELL programme. She noted that the meeting followed the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (Kobe, January 2005) and that this provided an opportunity for the AGEE to contribute to the implementation of the Hyogo Framework of Action. She stated that UNEP is taking a more hands-on implementation role alongside other international agencies to bring the important environmental management dimension into disaster planning and response. She added that one of the recent lessons from site assessments in the Indian Ocean is that a resilient and healthy environment can provide a buffer against natural disasters. She concluded by pointing out that environmental management is an investment in disaster prevention, not a cost.

Mr. Vladimir Sakharov, Deputy Chief of OCHA's Emergency Services Branch and Chief, Joint Environment Unit, introduced participants of the meetings, as well as staff of UNEP's DTIE/APELL and the Joint Environment Unit.

The meeting adopted the provisional agenda as contained in document EU/AG/36.

The meeting unanimously elected Mr. Kjell Larsson (Sweden) as Chairman, and Mr. Krishan Chand Gupta (India) as Vice-Chairman. Mr. Ulf Bjurman (Sweden) was elected as co-chairman during Mr. Larsson's absence on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June.

### **Emergency response: innovative strategies to meet complex challenges**

Dr. Patrick Lagadec, Director of Research at the *Ecole Polytechnique de Paris*, made a keynote address on innovative strategies to achieve better results in emergency response. His presentation focused on the challenges that disaster managers/responders face in dealing with emergencies, and on the key elements of modern or 'new' disasters and crises. He noted that new types of crisis are unpredictable and global in nature, and that it is therefore becoming more difficult to apply previous 'known answers' and lessons learned.

Dr. Lagadec stated that emergency responders, instead of simply running through checklists, should make a diagnosis, develop strategic intelligence and take initiatives that effectively manage new types of disasters. According to Dr. Lagadec, the aim of emergency response is not to predict unforeseeable or unpredictable events, but to train people to face them. He stated that in addition to a 'rapid reaction force' there is a need for a 'rapid reflection force'. Dr. Lagadec concluded that training should be provided at all levels from the top officials/senior managers to technical staff and local communities.

In ensuing discussions, the FAO representative supported the findings of Dr. Lagadec and noted that there was a need to further define ‘who does what’ in times of crisis, and for all stakeholders to work closer together.

Mr. Fritz Balkau of the APELL programme posed two open questions to be considered by the participants on how to define the way forward from a societal point of view, and how the private sector could be included to resolve a crisis.

According to Dr. Lagadec, the interest from the private sector is limited when it comes to addressing complex crises that are not of direct relevance to them.

The representative of Denmark stated that a distinction should be made between the organisational and the individual aspects of disaster management, and noted that a key challenge remains the effective coordination of both.

The Chairman concluded and summarized the agenda item (see Conclusions and Recommendations at the end of the document).

### **Environment and the Indian Ocean Tsunami Disaster – lessons to learn from response efforts**

Mr. Alain Pasche, environmental expert from Switzerland and UNDAC team member, introduced the document EU/AG/37, a consultants’ report on ‘*Emergency response and environmental issues during the Indian Ocean Earthquake–Tsunami: initial lessons to learn*’. The purpose of the study was to investigate some key issues, draw lessons and make recommendations to improve future response in addressing environmental emergencies. The study, which was conducted by Mr. Pasche and Dr. Calvi-Pariseti, revealed that there is clear distinction between immediate environmental risks, affecting health and safety, and medium- and long-term environmental aspects, including risks to livelihoods and ecosystems.

The report made the following recommendations:

- A clear division of roles and responsibilities between UNEP and the Joint Environment Unit must be recognized, and the cooperation between these partners must be improved. Mandates, roles and responsibilities of UNEP and the Joint Environment Unit should be clarified and – what is most important – respected. It was suggested that formal procedures should be developed on who should do what to address environmental concerns related to emergencies;
- The Joint Environment Unit and UNEP should link short- and long-term issues through practical initiatives and collaboration and ensure that this continuum is a seamless one and that, for example, activities (e.g. assessments) carried out during the early phases ‘feed into’ those conducted in later stages;
- The Joint Environment Unit should be able to count on stronger, guaranteed capacities. In particular, it is essential that the Unit can access financial and personnel resources in a more predictable way. This should involve, at a minimum, the Joint Environment Unit broadening its donor base to ensure response capacities are available with greater certainty;
- Supporting “traditional” responders by developing technical documents and guidelines, which should be put at the disposal of “humanitarian generalists”;
- The Joint Environment Unit should raise awareness amongst national authorities concerning secondary environmental risks of disasters;

- The Joint Environment Unit should strengthen its information and awareness raising initiatives to relevant UN agencies, keeping in mind the need for holistic disaster management approaches that integrate prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and rehabilitation;
- The Joint Environment Unit should develop a new rapid environmental assessment methodology.

The following points were raised during subsequent discussion:

The delegation of France stated that short- and long-term impacts are closely linked when it comes to reducing vulnerability. Mr. Pasche acknowledged this, but stressed the important practical distinctions in response operations between the immediate issues following an emergency, and the longer-term environmental/ecosystem impacts.

The representative of CARE added that the Joint Environment Unit needs better tools to assess immediate environmental impacts, and mentioned that NGO's and local communities should be better involved in assessment processes.

The representative of WWF commented that the study could have benefited from more participation of outsiders to draw a more comprehensive picture.

The FAO delegate suggested that another assessment could be conducted in six months to determine which of the measures identified in the study had been implemented.

Mr. Sakharov commented that the study was indeed not comprehensive, but rather, an initial opportunity to provide partners with some ideas on how to improve performance.

The delegation of the USA underlined the necessity of a stronger division of labour between the short-term response activities of the Joint Environment Unit and the medium-longer term activities of UNEP.

The delegation of Yemen supported the idea of clarifying roles of different agencies, noting that the number of UN actors involved in response is large and their respective roles often unclear to recipient countries.

The representative of OPCW supported strengthened linkages and coherence between national capacity building and international response.

The delegate of the Netherlands noted the need for stronger support for the Joint Environment Unit, and offered its assistance to provide further expertise.

Many delegations and the chairman thanked Mr. Pasche and Dr. Calvi-Pariseti for the lessons to learn report, noting that while the exercise was not comprehensive, it provided an excellent basis for discussion and future action.

### **Relevant decisions of the 23<sup>rd</sup> session of the UNEP Governing Council**

Mr. James Kamara, Acting Chief, UNEP Disaster Management Branch, introduced this topic and provided an overview of how UNEP and its Governing Council were established, and then described the 23<sup>rd</sup> session of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC-23/GMEF) that took place from 21-25 February 2005 in Nairobi. On the item, *Strengthening Environmental Emergency Response and Disaster Management*, Mr. Kamara highlighted that the Executive Director was requested to work in cooperation with the governments of the countries affected by the Indian Ocean Tsunami in:

- Providing appropriate expertise for supporting emergency environmental planning and assistance;

- Assessing environmental impacts of the tsunami and the environmental aspects of any subsequent risks as human health and livelihoods;
- Promoting the integration of environmental consideration into wider mitigation, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts;
- Promoting in the reconstruction efforts, in particular, international cooperation in the use of renewable energy technologies, as appropriate.

He also noted that the decision requests the Executive Director to continue developing an environmental approach to the identification and assessment of areas that are potentially at risk from natural and human-induced disasters, and guidelines outlining procedures and methodologies for environmental assessments of natural and human-induced disasters. Mr. Kamara concluded by noting that the decision invites governments and relevant institutions to provide extra-budgetary resources, on a voluntary basis for technical cooperation and capacity.

### **Outcome of the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, Kobe, Japan**

Messrs. John Harding, Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR) and Glenn Dolcemascolo, Adviser, UNEP, briefed the meeting on major outcomes of the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR), held in Kobe, Japan.

Mr. Harding described the rationale for ISDR, noting in particular that its purpose is to address root causes of disasters and look at the connections between vulnerability, poor development, environmental degradation, climate change, and disasters. Mr. Harding informed the group that ISDR was established in 2000 as the UN umbrella strategy for disaster reduction, and that it has a unique perspective by virtue of not engaged in operational aspects of emergency response. Mr. Harding noted that every disaster is a reminder of capacity or development problems. He went on to describe the WCDR's key outcome, the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 (HFA), which provides strategic goals, and key areas for action. He identified key next steps as developing strategic directions to ensure implementation of the HFA; promoting and developing ownership of the strategy, as well as internal preparation and support strategies; redefining ISDR architecture, and identifying how expert groups, academia, NGOs and the private sector can participate actively.

Mr. Dolcemascolo then explained how UNEP and ISDR had created a partnership to promote environmental disaster reduction. He noted that in addition, UNEP is reviewing its key objectives and strategies on disaster risk reduction and the Strategic Framework for Environmental Emergencies; establishing an ad hoc working group with ISDR; and engaging with the International Platform for Recovery. He then described UNEP activities in the following priority areas: ensuring that disaster risk reduction is a priority with a strong institutional basis; identifying, assessing and monitoring risks and enhancing early warning; using knowledge to create a culture of safety and resilience; reducing underlying risk factors and strengthening preparedness for an effective response.

The representative of Japan indicated their support for early warning initiatives, and raised a question as to what UNEP is doing with respect to implementation. In follow up discussions, Mr. Dolcemascolo underlined some of the points from his presentation on UNEP activities in the areas of assessment and data gathering as illustrations of their activities.

The delegate of Switzerland informed the group of the role his country had played at WCDR, and underlined that the challenge is to now implement the 60 concrete measures contained in the Hyogo Framework for Action.

Delegations from Morocco, Yemen and Nigeria raised questions about the actual implementation of risk reduction strategies in developing countries, and underscored the need for international efforts to be aligned and coordinated. The Jamaican representative indicated a need to look at practical, scenario-based

planning in risk reduction efforts. The delegation from Kenya drew the attention of the meeting to the need to preserve the environment as a vital step to reduce disaster vulnerability.

The FAO delegate explained his organization's efforts to reduce stockpiles of obsolete pesticides. He noted that several Joint Environment Unit missions had been undertaken in connection with pesticides, and welcomed increased collaboration with FAO to address such issues. The ICMM representative described their efforts to compile relevant case studies and indicated to the group that they would be willing to share relevant lessons and experiences. The IAEA delegate noted their experience with the development of the Joint Radiation Emergency Management Plan of the international organizations to coordinate activities in the event of radiation emergency, and cited this as an example that could be considered for environmental emergencies.

### **Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit - Overview**

Mr. Vladimir Sakharov, Chief, Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit, provided an overview of the Unit, focusing on its primary responsibilities for mobilization and coordination of environmental emergency response. He described the Unit's role in building response preparedness, and acting as Secretariat for the Environmental Emergencies Partnership. He underscored that the Joint Environment Unit is available on a 24-hour/day basis through the OCHA-Geneva Duty system. The Joint Environment Unit remains small by design and is not engaged in a significant separate fundraising, but rather, relies on in-kind support to provide an effective service.

### **Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies at a Local Level program (APELL) -Overview**

Mr. Fritz Balkau, Head, Production and Consumption Branch of UNEP/DTIE, introduced the APELL program and provided overview of how it works. He noted that APELL was ahead of its time when first developed, and is more relevant now than ever. He described the ten steps of the APELL process, and mentioned that it is both a risk reduction and preparedness endeavor. Mr. Balkau said that the Seveso Directive includes a requirement to involve communities, and that APELL provides a tool to actually do this. He characterized APELL as an honest, transparent process, and noted that APELL remains vital for disaster preparedness and risk reduction. He also underscored the importance of including the development community in disaster preparedness and risk reduction issues. In subsequent discussions, Mr. Balkau mentioned that APELL is not a brand name, but a locally owned process. He noted the importance of linking early warning technical know-how with local knowledge.

Ms. Sylvia Bankobeza, Legal Officer, Environmental Law Branch UNEP legal office made an intervention to point out UNEP's 10-year programme on environmental law.

The chairman concluded the session by noting that full support was given for past activities and that complementary ideas were provided and need to be followed up.

### **Major activities of the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit in 2003-2005**

Mr. René Nijenhuis, Programme Officer of the Joint Environment Unit, introduced the document EU/AG/38 and presented an overview of the Unit's activities in the past two years. In addition, a CD-ROM containing all major mission reports of that period was made available to participants.

Mr. Nijenhuis noted that, as agreed at the fifth AGEE meeting, the Joint Environment Unit continued to focus on the coordination and mobilization of international assistance to environmental emergencies and natural disasters with significant environmental impacts. Other Unit activities focused on improving the integration of environmental considerations into the response and management of natural disasters and the implementation of the global Environmental Emergencies Partnership (EEP).

Out of the many Joint Environment Unit activities between 2003 and 2005, the following were highlighted:

- Rapid Environmental Assessments undertaken in cooperation with UNDAC teams in response to the Indian Ocean Earthquake Tsunami;
- Rapid Environmental Assessments undertaken in cooperation with UNDAC teams in response to the Hurricanes Ivan and Jeanne in the Caribbean;
- Inter-agency multi-disciplinary assessment following a partial collapse of an uranium mine in the Democratic Republic of Congo;
- Rapid Environmental Assessment of three resettlement camps in Darfur, Sudan.

Mr. Nijenhuis then provided an example of the Joint Environment Unit's brokerage role. Following severe floods in Guyana, an UNDAC team was deployed. During assessments, it was observed that water behind an 80km-long dyke was in danger of spilling over the top, posing a serious risk to communities below the dam. In response, the Dutch Government mobilized two dam safety specialists through the Joint Environment Unit. The experts carried out stability assessments and provided recommendations to local authorities for short, medium, and long-term remedial actions. Some of these are currently being implemented in anticipation of the upcoming rainy season.

In terms of training activities and capacity building, the International Course on Environmental Disaster Operations, organized by the Swedish Rescue Services Agency under the auspices of NATO/Partnership for Peace, together with the Joint Environment Unit, was highlighted as a successful cooperation in which around 75 people had been trained in the past three years while new training opportunities were still being further explored. During the course of 2004, the Unit supported the participation of a senior emergency manager from Swaziland.

The UNECE representative described their role in industrial accidents, as well as a capacity building initiative in Caucasus and Central Asia, indicating that they would welcome Joint Environment Unit and APELL collaboration in this undertaking.

The delegation from Pakistan thanked the Joint Environment Unit for their environmental emergency assistance related to an oil spill in Karachi, noting that this had been effective and welcome. The Russian delegation also complemented the Joint Environment Unit's work more generally, noting that it was a small but effective organization. The delegation from Sri Lanka noted with appreciation the Joint Environment Unit's rapid response to the tsunami disaster as well as its efforts to improve environmental conditions in camps for displaced people, and thanked the Unit for its efforts.

The delegation from the Netherlands noted past collaboration with the Joint Environment Unit, including the use of a Dutch expert and laboratory facilities related to the Unit's mission to Tanzania. The Dutch representative cited this as a model for future collaboration, and indicated their strong interest to work with the Joint Environment Unit to achieve this.

The Swiss delegation made a detailed intervention stating their continued support to the Joint Environment Unit's mandate, while noting that in its emergency-related communications, the Joint Environment Unit should carefully differentiate between a) information, b) warning, c) alerting, and d) requesting support. The delegation also highlighted the Global Disaster Alert System (GDAS) as a potential source for maps and satellite imagery, indicated support for the Joint Environment Unit's function of deploying experts, and mentioned that Switzerland would explore how to support the mobilization of additional personnel through the Joint Environment Unit. Support was also expressed for enlarging the global network of National Focal Points.

The Swiss representative welcomed the extension of the UNDAC mechanism to deal with environmental emergencies, with advice and support from the Joint Environment Unit. In this connection, this delegation noted with appreciation the Joint Environment Unit's inputs into UNDAC Induction Courses. The delegation also mentioned that it would be helpful to define when the Joint Environment Unit responds with its own resources, and when it makes them available through UNDAC missions. The delegation raised a question of whether the Joint Environment Unit had sufficient resources to carry out its mandate for response and preparedness while also undertaking programs on training and capacity building. They also noted with appreciation the Environmental Emergencies Partnership, including the positive step of launching a Partnership website, and encouraged donors to enhance environmental emergency management in countries not able to do so themselves.

In concluding comments, Mr. Sakharov indicated that the intervention from the Swiss delegation and other governments show that the Joint Environment Unit is accountable, guided by the member countries, and that the AGEE is fulfilling its function. He agreed that there is a need for better coordination amongst UN agencies, which should speak with one voice in the field and noted that bilateral assistance, with the Joint Environment Unit performing a brokerage function, is typically most effective. Mr. Sakharov said that deployment of experts by the Joint Environment Unit depends on specific emergency cases, and is carried out in consultation with partners. He noted that prevention and preparedness activities occur within the scope of the Environmental Emergencies Partnership, in which he invited the full participation of all partners. He also mentioned that the Joint Environment Unit has taken steps to differentiate between information provision, warning, alerting and assistance request, and affected countries are urged to be clear in their requests.

The Chairman concluded and summarized the agenda item (see Conclusions and Recommendations at the end of the document).

### **APELL updates- latest activities and overall implementation**

Ms. Ruth Zugman Do Coutto, Programme Officer in UNEP's Division of Technology, Industry and Economics, presented the APELL programme.

The delegation of Morocco expressed their interest in applying APELL and asked whether emergency plans were an integrated part of the programme. The secretariat confirmed that emergency plans are part of APELL and that they are developed jointly with the communities.

The representative of Canada shared the Canadian experience with the audience, noting that in Canada a community needs to accept the establishment of an industrial activity before it becomes operational.

### **Application of UNDAC to natural disasters and environmental emergencies**

Mr. Jesper Lund, Humanitarian Affairs Officer in the Field Coordination Service Section of OCHA's Emergency Services Branch, presented the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) system to the audience.

UNOSAT representative described its services, highlighting that for many response activities of the Joint Environment Unit, UNOSAT has provided geographical information, especially satellite imagery.

Mr. Vladimir Sakharov noted that several UNEP staff had been trained for the UNDAC team in the past but, with the exception of UNEP staff in the Joint Environment Unit, had never been made available for deployment. He mentioned positive developments, including the recent training of the Joint Environment Unit's Programme Officer for the UNDAC team, and the fact that UNEP had accepted OCHA's offer to place a staff member on the upcoming UNDAC training course in Singapore.

The Chairman concluded and summarized the agenda item (see Conclusions and Recommendations at the end of the document).

## **Future activities of the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit and of the APELL programme**

Mr. Gerhard Putman-Cramer introduced the agenda item and made observations based on his 30 years of humanitarian work experience in the United Nations, and OCHA in particular. He highlighted that the number of actors involved in natural disaster response has grown tremendously in the past years, and that coordination has become an increasing challenge. In particular, having so many actors involved in emergencies could lead to overlap and duplication, undermining effectiveness of aid efforts at the expense of the people who need it most. Mr. Putman-Cramer observed that both governments and humanitarians increasingly recognized that the environmental dimensions of disasters must be understood and addressed appropriately. He agreed entirely that a hierarchy, combined with common sense, should be used to determine which environmental issues to deal with in an emergency. He emphasized that focus should be placed on environmental issues that are urgent and immediate during the response phase, leaving longer-term issues for the rehabilitation phases. To illustrate, he noted that if a storm precipitates a serious toxic waste issue that could kill people, this should be considered an immediate issue to be addressed already during the response phase. Serious sewage problems are another example of urgent environmental issues, as are environmental problems in IDP camps. Longer-term issues can include biodiversity and coral reefs. Issues of this nature are relevant to recovery and rehabilitation, but not to immediate response.

Mr. Putman-Cramer concluded by highlighting that governments were correct in 1994 when they created the Joint Environment Unit by integrating UNEP's technical expertise, into OCHA's overall response structure. This approach ensured that we understand and address environmental problems during the response phase, while avoiding a proliferation of new mechanisms and new organizations. Governments also made it very clear that they need one single entry point into the UN emergency relief system.

Mr. Roy Brooke, Humanitarian Affairs Officer in the Joint Environment Unit, presented the document '*Position paper on future directions and opportunities*' (EU/AG/39) and highlighted the Joint Environment Unit's commitment to continuous improvement based on recommendations from the AGEE.

The future directions document focused on 6 key areas; (i) roster of experts, (ii) the assessment capacity of the Joint Environment Unit, (iii) capacity building activities, (iv) communications, (v) cooperation and joint plan, and (vi) partnerships.

On the first area, Mr. Brooke noted that the Joint Environment Unit has faced in the recent years two major multi-country natural disasters (Hurricanes Ivan and Jeanne, and the Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami) that challenged the Unit's response capacity and its reliance on often informal relationships with governments. As a result, the Joint Environment Unit proposes to:

- Develop, with interested donors, agreements that spell out what types of experts can be deployed, and under what conditions;
- Expand the number of experts on retainer-type contracts;
- Enhance training for new UNDAC members in environmental assessment skills;
- Maintain efforts to bring more environmental experts to the UNDAC roster;
- Prepare an emergency response course for UNEP staff.

On the second issue, Mr. Brooke noted that the Joint Environment Unit had developed, together with CARE and the Benfield Hazard Research Centre, a rapid environmental assessment methodology. While the methodology has provided a solid basis for a number of assessments it has limited applicability for situations requiring a very rapid turnaround, for example UNDAC missions. Therefore, the Joint Environment Unit proposed to develop a new and faster assessment methodology.

With regards to the capacity building activities, the Joint Environment Unit suggested to continue and enhance training for the UNDAC Induction and refresher courses, as well as for the NATO/Partners for Peace International Course on Environmental Disaster Operations together with the Swedish Rescue Services Agency. It also proposed to elaborate a training module to assist countries with building their national capacity for environmental emergencies.

The Joint Environment Unit mentioned its intention to continue communication and outreach activities to raise awareness of its services. This would include participation in major conferences, improving Unit's reporting activities and establishing closer links with UNEP Regional Offices and OCHA's Regional Disaster Response Advisors.

In order to further improve the international response system, the Joint Environment Unit recommended to develop interface and standard operating procedures together with other response agencies. The development of a Joint/Interagency Emergency Response Plan is also suggested as a tool to enhance the effectiveness of the response system, especially following the duplication of efforts identified during the Indian Ocean Earthquake-Tsunami.

Finally, the Joint Environment Unit proposed activities to intensify cooperation with partners, and in particular with the APELL programme. A secondment or other professional exchange between the organizations was noted as a possibility in this respect. Mr. Brooke concluded his presentation with an invitation to donor countries to consider hosting the next AGEE meeting.

The delegate from Sweden kindly offered, subject to the final agreement of the national authorities, to host the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the AGEE in Kristinehamn, Sweden, in 2007.

The delegate from the United States of America complemented the secretariat for its excellent work and for following up with the advice provided in the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the AGEE. She expressed support for the roster of experts which would further the goal of brokerage carried out by the Joint Environment Unit. The delegate also supported the development of a Joint/Interagency Emergency Response Plan to address issues experienced during the Tsunami response, in particular, the identified overlap between Joint Environment Unit and UNEP activities, and to provide a more effective transition between short-, medium- and long-term issues. She welcomed future reports on progress made in this regard.

The delegation of Switzerland made a detailed statement expressing support for the Joint/Interagency Emergency Response Plan and for continued close cooperation with partners in the development of a new methodology for rapid environmental assessments. It invited the Joint Environment Unit to clarify the role of its roster of experts vis-à-vis the role of the UNDAC experts.

The delegation of the Russian Federation thanked the Joint Environment Unit for its excellent presentation and expressed its support for the establishment of a special roster of experts.

The representative of CARE thanked the Joint Environment Unit and cautioned that the roster of experts should be demand-driven and not supply-driven. In addition, he stressed the importance of involving local communities and local authorities in rapid environmental assessments.

The delegation of Jamaica shared its appreciation for the Joint Environment Unit's work and provided the following thoughts:

- There was a clear need for scenario-based planning, especially for multi-impact, multi-country disasters;
- United Nations organizations and organizations such as the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank should partner in disaster prevention;
- Local capacity and local tools should be duly incorporated in future activities.

The delegation of Canada expressed satisfaction with the longstanding relationship with the Joint Environment Unit and thanked the secretariat for a strategic and clear agenda for 2005-2007. Canada supported the development of a roster of experts and was interested to learn more about the specific requirements of the Joint Environment Unit. The delegate supported the development of the Joint/Interagency Emergency Response Plan and also suggested that the roster of experts should remain practical and operational. The Canadian experience with damage assessment could prove useful in the development of a new methodology for the Joint Environment Unit.

The delegation of Turkey expressed support for the Joint Environment Unit's work. It shared recent experiences in Turkey, including the harmonization of legislation and establishment of an enhanced crisis management center.

The Nigerian delegation suggested that the outcomes of the Kobe Conference regarding prevention should be mainstreamed in the work of both UNEP and OCHA, as both were active players in the Inter-Agency Task Force.

The delegation of Syria expressed appreciation for the presentation and asked whether the new assessment methodology would include legal and institutional arrangements.

The delegation of Denmark expressed support for the coordination and collaboration efforts of the Joint Environment Unit and in particular with the European Union (EU).

The Moroccan delegation expressed support for the proposed future activities and suggested that capacity-building activities should be demand-driven.

The delegation of the Netherlands thanked the Joint Environment Unit and welcomed continued discussions. He suggested that the roster of experts should be strategic and specifies the type, number and regional distribution of experts worldwide.

The delegate of China informed the meeting about the Chinese experience with environmental emergencies, including simulation exercises and a countrywide response network.

The delegation of Switzerland thanked the secretariat for the presentations and offered a detailed statement. In general this delegation agreed with the content of the document, in particular reaffirming the Joint Environment Unit core functions, i.e. notification, brokerage, mobilization and coordination of assistance. Regarding the six key issues identified in the document on the Joint Environment Unit's future directions, the Swiss delegation made a number of comments and suggestions. In particular, the Swiss Development Cooperation is willing to make additional efforts to provide the Joint Environment Unit with experts, and is ready to support the Unit in enhancing training of new UNDAC members in environmental assessment skills. This support would also cover the issues of expanding environmental assessment capacity, and enhancing training and capacity building. It was mentioned that the Joint Environment Unit should increase its visibility with potential recipients and providers of assistance. A closer collaboration between APELL and the Joint Environment Unit was necessary. The intention of the Joint Environment Unit to increase coordination and enhancement of this partnership was therefore welcomed. It was underlined that the Joint Environment Unit and the UNEP Asian Tsunami Task Force should have been mutually supportive, enabling coherent and efficient assistance. The Swiss delegation also said that the Joint Environment Unit should develop further alliances and partnerships with NGOs, academia and the private sector, whenever necessary and appropriate, as well as with other partners active in environmental emergencies. It was stressed that the creation of the Joint Environment Unit had been a result of intergovernmental decisions, and that UNEP should provide a much better support to the Joint Environment Unit, including financial commitments. The delegation of Switzerland noted that the deployment of a UNEP emergency environment team in Sri Lanka at the time of the Tsunami disaster should have been carried out in consultation with the Joint Environment Unit and other relevant UN

institutions. It was concluded that a clear commitment of UNEP to strengthen the Joint Environment Unit was required.

The Joint Environment Unit responded to questions of the participants by stating that all activities are, and will continue to be, demand-driven. The Unit would provide more detailed information on the roster of experts to interested delegations, incorporating the various suggestions made. The focus of the new methodology will be on the immediate risks and impacts and any secondary urgent risks. The intention is to keep the roster of experts focused and practical. The Joint Environment Unit mentioned discussions with the Turkish authorities about a possible lessons learnt exercise and contingency planning in Izmit, together with APELL, as a follow-up to the earthquake disaster there in 1999.

### **Future activities of APELL**

Ms. Ruth Zugman Do Coutto, introduced the future activities for the coming two years for the APELL programme.

The proposed future activities would focus on:

- Expanding APELL into natural disasters using a multi-hazard approach and demonstration projects;
- Strengthening links between APELL and the Joint Environment Unit on capacity building and training DTIE staff on environmental emergencies;
- Strengthening APELL as a UNEP tool to achieve Hyogo Framework for Action goals;
- Increasing APELL implementation in the next two years in Latin America, India, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Morocco, Yemen and Iran. In the latter two cases in particular, implementation will be done collaboratively with the Joint Environment Unit;
- Strengthening the links with the private sector in the area of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), and exploring links between APELL and the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI);
- Exploring with the insurance sector whether an APELL-prepared community could benefit from lower insurance premiums, and developing guidelines to profile the risk of a community.

Several country delegates expressed their willingness to have APELL implemented in their countries, especially Senegal and Nigeria. Kenya and Ghana questioned the way in which UNEP chooses the countries in which it operates, while India and Jamaica discussed national level capacity building and strengthening of national institutions using APELL. Discussions with delegates from Indonesia, Romania, Sri Lanka, Brazil and Morocco confirmed their desire to strengthen APELL-related projects in their countries.

The Dutch delegate mentioned that he would study the possibility of further cooperation with APELL.

The representative of Canada offered to consider sharing their emergency response system through a multinational working group convened by UNEP.

A number of organizations and agencies, including UNECE and INWENT also showed their interest in further collaboration with APELL.

The Chairman concluded and summarized the agenda item (see Conclusions and Recommendations at the end of the document).

## **An emergency common operating picture for all**

Ms. Mary-Ann Spicer, Manager, Response National Environmental Emergencies Centre (NEEC), and Mr. Christopher Dejager, Technical Architect with AMEC Earth and Environmental Consultants, provided a presentation on Canada's new National Emergency Response System (NERS). Furthermore, an Environment Canada initiative that illustrates the NERS principles in action – the National Environmental Emergencies System (E2MS) - was introduced.

Both presentations were very well received and many requests made for further information.

## **UNEP Strategic Framework**

Mr. James Kamara introduced UNEP's *Strategic Framework on Emergency Prevention, Preparedness, Assessment, Mitigation and Response* and the document '*Issues for Consideration*'. He noted that the Strategic Framework provides guidance to international organizations, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, and national governments. A variety of issues suggest the need to review the Framework, including the recognition by governments and civil society of inter-linkages between environmental degradation and disasters, and growing knowledge of relationships between environmental disasters and development.

Below a reflection of the subsequent discussion has been given.

The delegation of Yemen requested assistance to implement the Strategic Framework at the national level.

A representative of CARE noted that there appears to be overlap between UNEP's framework and UNDP's ongoing activities. He suggested that UNEP could be the gatekeeper of environmental impacts of reconstruction and relief operations, as this seems not to be widely covered currently.

The Joint Environment Unit offered to assist UNEP with the Strategic Framework review by using the website of the Environmental Emergencies Partnership.

The delegation of Kenya expressed its support for the Framework and asked how the framework presented by Canada could be linked to the Strategic Framework of UNEP.

The delegation of the United States of America referred to the issue of short-term and long-term impacts as discussed under agenda item on the document, '*Emergency response and environmental issues during the Indian Ocean Earthquake-Tsunami: initial lessons to learn*,' asked how key issues raised in the document, for example the distinction between short-term and longer term environmental issues, would be addressed within the framework. The delegation suggested that the development of a Joint/Inter-Agency Emergency Response Plan be included in the Strategic Framework.

Mr. Stanley Szymanski, APELL expert, suggested including the industry as a separate target audience in the Strategic Framework.

Mr. James Kamara responded to questions from the participants by indicating that the Strategic Framework is intended to assist, amongst other, national governments by providing guidance and that no implementation programme or assistance accompanies the Strategic Framework. He welcomed the use of the Partnership website to collect suggestions for the review and suggested that applications of the Canadian framework could be developed on a bilateral basis. He agreed with the importance of including the Joint/Inter-Agency Emergency Response Plan in the Strategic Framework and that activities of the industry sector should be included.

## **Strengthening linkages between prevention, preparedness and response**

Mr. Brooke introduced the Environmental Emergencies Partnership to the participants. He explained that the Partnership objective is to bridge gaps between prevention, preparedness and response, and between different sectors and disciplines. The Partnership is implemented primarily through practical projects that respond to stakeholder needs, and that it does not compete with existing programmes, but rather complements and supports them. Mr. Brooke described specific activities being undertaken in the framework of the Partnership, and invited participants to join the Partnership and undertake activities within it.

Mr. Balkau described the need to strengthen linkages between preparedness, prevention and response. Emergencies have both 'upstream' and 'downstream' effects, and because of this, he noted, it is both more effective and efficient to identify relevant linkages before disaster strikes. Examples of linkages can already be found in, for example, certain government disaster management policies, chemical accident procedures, 'upstream' industry approaches to safety, the APELL programme and global strategies such as ISDR. Mr. Balkau described how the local level linkages could be built through the APELL process, and structural linkages through the APELL programme.

The delegation of the Russian Federation expressed its support for the mandate of the Joint Environment Unit, its efforts to improve the roster of experts, and the proposed future activities of the Joint Environment Unit. This delegation expressed concern about UNEP not performing its full role in the Joint Environment Unit.

The OCHA Regional Disaster Response Advisor for Eastern Africa supported the strong cooperation between the two organizations. He suggested that, given the number of countries with weak governments and serious environmental problems, the Joint Environment Unit should continue to operate in complex emergencies where environmental emergencies occur. Mr. Brooke welcomed and agreed with the suggestion.

The Nigerian delegation shared the opinion that numerous environmental emergencies have systemic failures at their origins. The linkages between these failures and response activities are important and the delegate asked if EEP could develop specific programs to focus on this. In response, Mr. Brooke noted that the EEP can support existing programs, but was not a programme developer or implementer in its own right.

The representative of DOW stressed that first response, which is generally provided by local communities, highlights the importance of programmes such as APELL.

Mr. Sakharov further explained that the Partnership was a flexible arrangement, and could be joined without formalities and at no cost, emphasizing that the Partnership is owned by all partners rather than by OCHA and UNEP only. He stated that Africa remained a priority region for the Joint Environment Unit and welcomed the participation of the delegations from specific countries from the African continent. He acknowledged the challenge of increasing Joint Environment Unit work in francophone countries of Africa, noting that additional resources would be needed for this.

UN-Habitat representative informed participants of its development mandate and its focus on bridging gaps between recovery and sustainable development. UN-Habitat can advise and assist in these areas and has a roster of disaster managers with expertise in human settlements.

### III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The meeting:

*Recognizes* the strong appreciation and very positive support expressed by countries for the work of the Joint Environment Unit and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Awareness and Preparedness at Local Level (APELL) programme, noting also the important synergies between the two organizations. The meeting wishes to see both organizations reinforced to meet future challenges;

*Welcomes* the continuing collaboration within the United Nations between OCHA and UNEP through the Joint Environment Unit, a partnership that combines OCHA's exclusive international response coordination mandate and UNEP's technical expertise;

*Notes* with satisfaction that the effectiveness of the Joint Environment Unit in carrying out its principal mandate to mobilize and coordinate the international response to environmental emergencies and that this mandate is reconfirmed by governments, including at the 23<sup>rd</sup> session of the UNEP Governing Council in Nairobi;

*Also notes* with satisfaction the Joint Environment Unit's role as Secretariat to the Environmental Emergencies Partnership, and the partnership's work to initiate practical activities that 'bridge gaps' between phases of the disaster management cycle and between disaster management stakeholders;

*Recognizes* with appreciation the Joint Environment Unit's effective engagement in acute phases of response to natural disasters with environmental impacts, including the recent tsunami disaster; environmental emergencies; and in building environmental emergency response capacity in developing countries; and in the mobilization and coordination of assistance to meet identified urgent needs in complex emergencies such as Darfur;

*Recognizes* and supports the Joint Environment Unit's strategic approach to continually improving and upgrading the delivery of its core mandate, including strengthening capacity through an improved network/roster of experts; awareness raising; developing additional environmental assessment methodologies; and building alliances and enhancing integration within OCHA and with other organizations;

*Recognizes* with appreciation the role of APELL as tool for disaster prevention and risk reduction and the vital role it has played in numerous countries;

*Appreciates* the work of OCHA, in consultation with ISDR, in undertaking a lessons learned exercise on environmental aspects of the tsunami response;

*Urges* action to address the findings of the report '*Emergency response and environmental issues during the Indian Ocean Earthquake-Tsunami: initial lessons to learn.*' Particular attention should be paid to the finding that activities of the Joint Environment Unit and some UNEP structures overlapped during the tsunami response;

*Appreciates* the initiative of UNEP and OCHA to engage in discussions to strengthen their collaboration through the Joint Environment Unit,

*Welcomes* UNEP's recent efforts to ensure its environmental experts are trained and made available to the UNDAC response mechanism, and encourages further such action;

*Recognizes* the necessity of appropriate financing of the activities of the Joint Environment Unit;

*Requests* that UNEP maintain, and enhance wherever appropriate, financial and other support to APELL.

## **Discussion on environmental lessons learned document**

The report *'Emergency response and environmental issues during the Indian Ocean Earthquake-Tsunami: initial lessons to learn'* was well received. While international response to environmental aspects of the tsunami disaster was generally good, improvements need to be made. In particular there is a need for: clarifying roles and responsibilities between UNEP and the Joint Environment Unit; strengthening the Joint Environment Unit's capacity; elaborating common methodologies for environmental assessment, including a new methodology to be developed by the Joint Environment Unit; clearly distinguishing between immediate and long term needs or priorities; and ensuring the coordinating role of the Joint Environment Unit in relation to affected countries and the different actors in disaster management. Other issues include:

- NGOs and local people should be involved in assessments as far as possible, and the local needs and causal factors should be integrated into a coherent methodology for disasters;
- APELL is recognized as the main process or instrument for creating adequate awareness and preparedness;
- Relevant international organizations engaged with disaster management are encouraged to eliminate overlapping and duplicative efforts through knowledge of, and respect for, respective mandates and competencies; enhanced dialogue, and practical projects that link together the phases of the disaster management cycle. In this context, the mandate of the Joint Environment Unit related to environmental emergency response phase activities is emphasized;
- Learning lessons from incidents is of crucial importance to improve policies and actions to minimize consequences of similar incidents in the future and where possible to prevent such risks and consequences. More attention needs to be given to the process for ensuring dissemination and an efficient follow-up and practical implementation of the lessons learned. The Joint Environment Unit is invited to report to the next AGEE on this matter and in particular in respect to the tsunami disaster.

## **Agenda Item 2: Major Activities of the Joint Environment Unit in 2003-2005**

Strong support for, and appreciation of, the Joint Environment Unit's assistance was expressed. The Joint Environment Unit should maintain and enhance all its traditional functions including mobilization of resources and coordination of international response, education and training or capacity building for response, response preparedness and other risk reduction activities.

The role undertaken by the Joint Environment Unit in addressing environmental issues in humanitarian operations and training UNDAC team members in environmental matters was welcomed.

To ensure that strong and effective efforts continue in all these facets of Joint Environment Unit activities, donors and countries are invited to provide in-kind expertise and resources as required, and maintain support for training and deploying experts through the Joint Environment Unit.

## **Agenda Item 3: APELL Updates: Latest Activities and Overall Implementation**

APELL continues to effectively disseminate information, provide tools for raising awareness and preparedness at local level and support the development of prevention policies. Excellent examples of coherent prevention policies are found in Central and South America. The national APELL Center in India provides a useful model for other countries and regions. APELL can also be important in industrialized countries. This is illustrated by the way Haute Normandy, France, is using APELL to improve risk communication in accordance with the EU Seveso Directive.

Noting that APELL and the Joint Environment Unit have clear, strong synergies, these organizations should expand practical collaboration between their organizations. This could include possible

professional exchanges between the two agencies, with the objective of ensuring better links between prevention, preparedness and response, and common efforts including practical projects.

#### **Agenda Item 4: Application of UNDAC to natural disasters and environmental emergencies**

The UNDAC team continues to be a vital partner for the Joint Environment Unit. Effort is encouraged on the part of countries to ensure strong representation of environmental experts on the UNDAC roster. The Joint Environment Unit proposals to develop additional environmental training material for the UNDAC team members are strongly supported and endorsed.

#### **Agenda Item 5: Future Activities of the Joint Environment Unit and the APELL programme.**

The Joint Environment Unit has undertaken many useful steps as part of its ongoing strategy to strengthen core functions. These efforts and the approach, proposed in the document *Position Paper on Future Directions and Opportunities*, are strongly supported. Specific options include:

- Enhancing the Joint Environment Unit roster of experts, in particular through specific new agreements with donor countries and experts and new 'retainer'-type contracts, as appropriate;
- Developing an assessment methodology that can be carried out in the hours immediately following a disaster, in collaboration with organizations including UNDAC and INSARAG as required. The methodology, while focused on immediate issues, must also link to long-term assessment and action;
- Developing, together with donor countries, environmental support modules with basic measurement equipment and associated training of environmental experts;
- Developing interface procedures with international organizations involved in environmental emergencies and exploring the development of a Joint Environmental Emergency Response Plan, which can enhance response effectiveness, increase collaboration with countries and the European Union, improve efficiency, form a basis for measuring results and ensure greater coherence between the shorter-term response activities of the Joint Environment Unit and the medium-longer term activities of UNEP;
- Maintaining and enhancing activities to ensure efficient environmental emergency response and build response preparedness capacity. Specifically, the Joint Environment Unit should continue to use its key tools including *Guidelines for the Development of a National Environmental Contingency Plan* and *Guidelines for Establishing a National Environmental Emergency Response Mechanism*, while also enhancing the curriculum used for national-level environmental emergency capacity building. In this context, donors are invited to support the development of enhanced training modules and materials, training sessions, and to ensure the full participation of developing country participants in all such activities.

After 16 years, APELL is more relevant than ever. However, while APELL has spread to many places, there are many more that remain unprepared for disasters. Even where APELL has taken root, planning and preparedness will never be complete and additional steps are needed to develop cultures of safety and make communities more resilient to disaster. There is, therefore, an ongoing need for APELL updating, refresher activities and exercises or simulations. APELL should be maintained at a high level of implementation and strengthened through activities including:

- Strengthening the APELL-Joint Environment Unit relationship, in particular by joint capacity and institution building through education and training. Such activities would help build the APELL-Joint Environment Unit partnership and could have the effect of supplementing the Joint Environment Unit's roster of experts;

- The development of tools and strategies to address demands in the area of natural disasters. Activities could include coordination with the Swedish Safe Community program at local levels to increase risk communication with the public, and children in particular;
- Improving links with the private sector, including industrial and insurance sectors, taking into consideration the growing corporate social responsibility agenda;
- Work with more practical demonstration projects in cooperation with national governments, national platforms or APELL centers in order to institutionalize APELL at national level;
- The elaboration of regional strategies to expand APELL implementation in regions and countries.

### **Agenda Item 6: An Emergency Common Operating Picture for All**

The Canadian delegation presented their new national organization for crisis management and an information and decision support system, to enable other countries to learn from their experiences. The presentation was found to be useful and of great interest to the AGEE participants. The initiative taken by Canada to share their insights was appreciated, and it was recognized that other countries may also have solutions that could be shared within the group.

### **Agenda Item 7: UNEP Strategic Framework**

The review of the UNEP Strategic Framework should be undertaken using the AGEE as a platform, with appropriate resources, and in the context of the Environmental Emergencies Partnership.

### **Agenda Item 8: Strengthening Linkages between Preparedness, Prevention and Response**

The Joint Environment Unit should continue to catalyze new projects creating linkages between prevention, preparedness and response that respond to stakeholder needs in its role as Secretariat for the Environmental Emergencies Partnership. In this regard, governments and stakeholders are invited to review possibilities for information sharing and capacity building projects that could be undertaken within the scope of the Partnership.

### **General**

Sweden offered, subject to confirmation, to host the 7<sup>th</sup> AGEE meeting in 2007 in Kristinehamn, Sweden. Other countries were encouraged to consider hosting subsequent AGEE meetings.

The AGEE expressed particular gratitude to the Government of Switzerland for its longstanding and strong support to the Joint Environment Unit.

Senior management of UNEP and OCHA are asked to allocate the necessary resources for the biennium 2005-2007 for the administration and operation of the Joint Environment Unit

The AGEE thanked Fritz Balkau for his many years of hard and effective work, which have benefited the APELL and disaster risk reduction more generally. Participants wished him well for his retirement.

The AGEE thanked the Joint Environment Unit for excellent preparations, which made the meeting very successful and pleasant for the participants.

The meeting agreed on need for reports at the next AGEE on:

- Actions taken on the lessons learned report;
- Progress on the roster of experts, the assessment methodology, and the Joint Response Plan;
- Coordination and joint activities between the Joint Environment Unit and APELL;
- Progress on the Partnership.