

Report from the  
Global Environmental  
Governance Forum:  
Reflecting on the Past,  
Moving into the Future

June 28-July 2, 2009  
Glion, Switzerland



Global  
Environmental  
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Project

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***GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE  
IN THE 21ST CENTURY:  
WAY AHEAD WIDE OPEN***



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JUNE 28-JULY 2, 2009 • GLION, SWITZERLAND

In June 2009, several generations of environmental leaders gathered at the *Global Environmental Governance Forum: Reflecting on the Past, Moving into the Future* in Glion, Switzerland to rediscover the past, analyze the present and imagine the future of global environmental governance. In a historic meeting, all five Executive Directors who had served the United Nations Environment Programme since its creation in 1972—Maurice Strong, Mostafa Tolba, Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Klaus Töpfer and Achim Steiner—came together to discuss environmental governance. They were joined by seventy other participants from twenty-six countries and a number of governments, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, multilateral organizations, businesses, and media. Thirteen “emerging leaders” from nine countries selected through an open competitive process took part in the Forum and began to lay the groundwork for a global network of young professionals in global environmental governance.



Maria Ivanova, *Director  
Global Environmental Governance Project*

This report seeks to reflect the main points from the discussions at the *Global Environmental Governance Forum*. It does not reflect a consensus view but simply a stylized version of the passionate accounts in the course of four days of what happened, why, and what must be done to improve the state of the planet. A list of participant is included as an appendix. All responsibility for the content of this report remains with the author.

The Forum was convened by the *Global Environmental Governance Project* of Yale University and the College of William and Mary. It was made possible through the generous contributions from the United Nations Foundation, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Horn of Africa Regional Environment Center, the University of Geneva, the United Nations Institute of Training and Research, and the governments of Germany, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland.

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## Executive Summary

Several generations of environmental leaders came together at the *Global Environmental Governance Forum* to rediscover the past, analyze the present and imagine the future of global environmental governance.

The stories of the founding architects of the global environmental governance system illuminate the original vision and design of the system and of the United Nations Environment Programme, its anchor institution. One of the core principles of institutional design which originates from the 1970s is that form should follow function. Participants identified a set of five core functions, based closely on the model system devised by UNEP's founders, which the parts of any future system must perform *as a whole*: 1) monitoring, assessment and early warning, 2) policy and norm development, 3) capacity development, 4) enforcement, and 5) coordination.

UNEP and the agencies, ministries, and non-governmental organizations it works with around the globe have met with some successes over the past forty years. But the system of global environmental governance has not lived up to expectations or to the needs of the moment. The battles won have generally been isolated, and many have not been sustained over time. The challenges have

been persistent and broader. At the core of the challenges stands the persistent false dichotomy of the environment and the economy. Moreover, sustainable development, the paradigm for understanding the relationship between economic growth and environmental protection has largely failed to reform economic decision-making in the way originally intended. A new vision of an economy focused less on short-term rewards and externalized risk and more on long-term values of sustainability and social justice is needed.

Concrete, practical and realistic steps are essential to building momentum in the reform process. At the same time, a broad, transformational vision needs to inform all proposals for change. The essential elements of an action agenda include:

1. Foster Leadership
2. Reframe the Environment-Economy Dichotomy
3. Cultivate Shared Values
4. Animate Communication
5. Develop an Analytical Foundation for Evaluating Governance
6. Seize Political Opportunities

## REDISCOVERING THE PAST

*"I suggest that this group bring back to the governments of the world the principles they themselves declared in 1972."*

Dr. Mostafa Tolba,  
UNEP Executive Director 1976-1992



The stories of the founding architects of the global environmental governance system illuminate the original vision and design of the system and of the United Nations Environment Programme, its anchor institution. These accounts reveal an initial vision for an agile and able intergovernmental body that would bring coherence, competence and connectivity in an institutional landscape of independent agencies with existing priorities. The new UN body would inform, guide, regulate, coordinate, and support governments

and UN organizations in developing an environmental focus and try to resolve environmental conflicts. The founders challenged the conventional wisdom that UNEP's original design was inadequate and has been outpaced by events. Rather, it seems that UNEP never quite grew into its design.

One of the core principles of institutional design which originates from the 1970s is that form should follow function. Much thought went into making the form of the newly created environmental body correspond to its functions. Within the US government, John W. McDonald, Director of Economic and Social Affairs at the Bureau of International Organization Affairs at the State Department, had by 1970 discussed the possibility of a new UN agency for the environment and started to gather support for it in the Nixon Administration. On the intergovernmental level, Maurice Strong, who served as Secretary General of the Stockholm Conference in 1972 and later as first Executive Director of UNEP, observed that the new organization's core functions could only be performed at the international level by an independent entity which is not tied to any individual sectoral or operational responsibilities and is able to take an objective overall view of the multiple technical and policy implications of international cooperation in environmental

Maurice Strong and  
Ambassador John W. McDonald



governance. The creators of the new UN organ thus understood its role as normative and catalytic and saw the organization as a “brain, not a bureaucracy” that would ensure coherent collective environmental efforts. In December 1972 General Assembly Resolution 2997 (XXII) instituted the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as the new UN body for the global environment.

## **DESIGNING THE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

UNEP’s creators chose the institutional **form of a United Nations Programme**—rather than a specialized agency—to prevent environment from becoming another “sector” within the UN system. Indeed, as Maurice Strong recalled, “right from the beginning, it was recognized that UNEP could not be sectoralized, that the worst thing you could do is sectoralize the environment; because inherently the decisions and the actions that affect the environment are taken largely through the economy. They have social impacts, they have economic impacts, and they have environmental impacts.” Instead, as the environmental “anchor” of the whole UN system, UNEP was expected to be an institution which would integrate environment throughout other issue areas such as health, trade, labor, and development.

To this end, one of UNEP’s core **functions** was coordinating the activities of other UN agencies. Resolution 2997 formally instituted not only UNEP but also the Environment Coordination Board. As John W. McDonald explained, the Board was designed as “a coordinating committee chaired by the head of UNEP, with all of the other agencies in the UN system who had a

In 1972, along with UNEP’s Secretariat, Governing Council, and Environment Fund, General Assembly Resolution 2997 established the Environment Coordination Board (ECB) under the auspices of the UN Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC). Chaired by UNEP’s Executive Director, the ECB comprised the Executive Heads of the UN agencies. Its principal mandate was to ensure cooperation and coordination in the UN system on environmental programs and to report annually to UNEP’s Governing Council. In 1978, the ACC fully assumed the functions of the ECB and each agency appointed a Designated Official on Environmental Matters (DOEM) to coordinate with UNEP’s Executive Director. Held under the continued chairmanship of UNEP’s Executive Director, the DOEM oversaw the System-Wide Medium-Term Environment Program (SWMTEP).

Following the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, the ACC established the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD), which reported to the Commission on Sustainable Development. With the focus having moved away from environment and UNEP having lost leadership position, the DOEM too lost influence and in 1995 was replaced by the Inter-Agency Environment Management Group (IAEG). Shortly thereafter, the UN Secretary-General recommended the replacement of the IAEG with the Environmental Management Group (EMG). In 2001, the ACC was transformed into the UN System Chief Executives Board (CEB) for Coordination and the IACSD ceased to exist. The Environment Management Group (EMG) was established in 2001 to coordinate UN agencies, programmes, organs, and Secretariats of Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

piece of the serious action on the environment, to sit together and ensure that there was no overlap and duplication” and that a common vision was attained. The Board’s supervisory body dismantled it in a 1978 attempt to streamline communications, however. The Board was replaced by a series of improvised committees which were never able to fulfill the original purpose of the Board (see sidebar on previous page).

*“The worst decision taken by the United Nations was to abolish the Environment Coordination Board.”*

*Dr. Mostafa Tolba,  
UNEP Executive Director, 1976-1992*

UNEP’s creators believed that the organization’s position as a leader and coordinator in the UN system would be best established through control over resources to be disbursed to the rest of the UN agencies and marked explicitly for environmental purposes. UNEP’s **finances** were therefore structured with its coordination mandate in mind. The original Environment Fund, proposed by the United States in the run-up to the Stockholm Conference, was expected to finance international environmental efforts in the UN system while keeping a constant view on the national level where the research, training, and management ultimately takes place. The Fund was also meant to ensure that “due account” was taken of “the special needs of the developing countries.” By design, the Environment Fund was outside of the regular UN budget, and was supposed to attract government support for special projects in the whole field of the environment similar to UNDP for development. During the decades following its creation, however, the Environment Fund gradually drifted from its original purpose, as UNEP’s own initiatives became the destination for most money and less capital was available for

“Ten governments stepped forward and said that they would like the environment Secretariat to be located in their capital. The official US position was Washington, the fallback position was Geneva. The Austrian Government wanted to make Vienna the third UN city after New York and Geneva – but all they did was divide the West. Location became an acute North/South issue. The South argued that they never had a UN body headquartered in the South. Their delegations argued among themselves and finally narrowed the candidacies down to two: Kenya and India. The Indian Ambassador in the UN was about 5 ft. tall and weighed about 100 pounds; the Kenyan Ambassador was 6 ft. 7”, weighed 300 pounds and wore flowing robes. They were walking down the halls like this arguing – quite a sight! The Kenyan President, Mr. Kenyatta finally told his Ambassador to tell the Indian Ambassador to tell the Indian Prime Minister, Mrs. Gandhi that unless the Secretariat was located in Nairobi, he would kick every Indian out of Kenya much like Idi Amin had done with the Indians in Uganda several months earlier. Mrs. Gandhi withdrew the Indian offer to host the new environmental body. The final resolution on location had one candidate city – Nairobi – and was approved in the General Assembly 93-1 with 30 abstentions. The United States was the single vote against Nairobi. All of the abstentions were from the developed world, where the money was supposed to come from...”

*Ambassador John W. McDonald,  
Secretary of U.S. Delegation to UNCHE;  
Session 1, 29 June 2009.*

See also, Ambassador McDonald’s book “The Shifting Grounds of Conflict and Peacebuilding,” Lexington Books, 2008.

new environmental initiatives at other UN agencies and for their coordination. Perhaps to fill this gap and return to the original vision of assisting developing countries in implementation of environmental agreements, governments created the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in 1991.

Not all of the functions considered vital for UNEP's success were realized in its form. In particular, the mechanism for environmental conflict resolution suggested by the U.S. delegation was not approved and consequently UNEP was not suited to solve the problems of enforcement and accountability which its founders correctly anticipated would arise between governments. The **location** of UNEP's Secretariat was also a component of the original system which was not rationally designed in line with the principle 'form follows function.' Time constraints prevented the governments at Stockholm from formalizing the new organization's physical location and by the time the question of UNEP's location arose in the UN General Assembly in November 1972, the issue had become intensely political (see sidebar on facing page).

Although these design features have marred UNEP's performance, they do not obscure the fact that the Programme was developed by men and women with clear priorities and sharp instincts. They knew which functions they wanted the institution to perform, and they devised a form appropriate to the task despite opposition from some governments and many of the specialized agencies. As a contemporary UNEP official exclaimed at the Global Environmental Governance Forum in 2009, "for some reason something happened to create in 1972 the UN Environment Programme with possibly a stronger mandate than we have today, with an Environment Fund, a Coordination Board and a

system-wide programmatic approach." Yet today many, if not most, of the environmental problems recognized in 1972 continue unabated. In the words of Elizabeth Dowdeswell, UNEP Executive Director from 1993 to 1997, "on virtually any indicator on the environmental front we are in a wobbly disequilibrium." So given that UNEP's design was innovative and carefully conceived, what has stood in the way of effective global environmental governance?

*"As far as I've heard from the leaders of the past, this has never been easy. But it happened against the odds. It happened through the strength of leadership; it happened through the strength of passion; it happened through the strength of commitment to purpose."*

John Scanlon, Policy Advisor  
to UNEP Executive Director

John Scanlon



## ANALYZING THE PRESENT

*“We have won many battles, but we are still losing the planet.”*

James Gustave ‘Gus’ Speth,  
UNDP Administrator 1993-1999



UNEP and the agencies, ministries, and non-governmental organizations it works with around the globe have met with some successes over the past forty years. But the system of global environmental governance has not lived up to expectations or to the needs of the moment. The battles won have generally been isolated, and many have not been sustained over time. The challenges have been persistent and broader. At the core of the challenges stands the persistent false dichotomy of the environment and the economy. Yet, as Klaus Töpfer emphasized, “the environment is not an esoteric topic of those who have no other problems in the world, but is in the center of economic stability.”

That UNEP was established at all, at the height of the Cold War and in an atmosphere heavy with mistrust between rich and developing nations, counts as a major victory. The Programme’s existence testifies to the ability of governments to respond to public concerns about pollution and depletion of natural resources. The further successes of the global environmental governance structure were attained despite the relatively scant resources at UNEP’s disposal. The accomplishments of the environmental governance structure need to be studied and understood as we prepare to confront more

problems – some that are new, and others that have persistently resisted UNEP’s efforts.

### SUCCESSES

#### *UNEP as catalyst*

One of the main drivers behind UNEP’s creation was the need to spur the various elements of the UN system to action on the environment. Designed as a catalyst, UNEP in general has been able to prod the UN specialized agencies into moving on environmental problems in concert. It has also motivated governments to address environmental problems collectively such as the successful initiative to address pollution in the Mediterranean. UNEP’s efforts were most successful, though, when the Environment Fund was distributed among other agencies for environmental activities. After UNEP started to use the Fund to flesh out its own activities and staff, its catalytic role diminished significantly. At this point the organization began to compete with the agencies it was supposed to coordinate. UNEP has also directed the creation of a number of celebrated international environmental agreements, norms, and initiatives. After the creation of most of the multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), however, independent secretariats were set up, often far from Nairobi. UNEP in most cases has lost influence and authority over the secretariats it established.

### ***Local pollution decreased***

A number of national-level environmental problems, such as local air and water pollution, have been satisfactorily addressed. In developed nations across the globe, and in some developing nations as well, vehicle emission standards have become more stringent, leaded gasoline has been phased out of use, and point source emissions are well regulated. The visibility and palpability of the problems, sustained public demand for action, and the ability of national governments to regulate within their borders have all contributed to lasting improvements in pollution reduction. As Bill Ruckelshaus, the first Administrator of the US Environmental Protection Agency noted, “We had rivers that caught on fire. We had the desire of the people living in Denver to see the mountains again and people in Los Angeles to see one another. We had smell, touch and feel kind of pollution problems that have now been dealt with.” At the international level, in the realm of problems that UNEP was designed to solve, success has been more limited. With the Montreal Protocol of 1987, UNEP successfully recruited governments to reverse ozone depletion. But in other areas, including climate change, ocean pollution, biodiversity loss, and fisheries depletion, little or no progress has been made.

### ***Scientific understanding improved***

Widespread and accessible scientific understanding of the environment and human-generated phenomena such as pollution, habitat destruction, and resource depletion, has increased exponentially since the 1960s. An unassailable scientific foundation has made many environmental problems, especially climate change, a high-priority political issue for many heads of state. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, created jointly by UNEP and the World Meteorological Organization, has provided an innovative, power-

ful, and safe avenue for governments to address climate change in their policy process. Ultimately, the outcomes of the climate change negotiations will be determined by values, economics, and politics. This seems to suggest that without a scientific assessment body like the IPCC to address other global environmental concerns, such as ocean pollution, land degradation, and species loss, it will be difficult to establish a connection between understanding of the issue and the policy process.

### ***Norm and law development***

International environmental law is among the fastest growing fields of international law, and states have created and agreed to a number of norms. These are, however, “soft law norms,” difficult to enforce and institutionalize, and their proliferation has actually fragmented the authority of international environmental institutions. Each new agreement establishes a new, independent bureaucracy far from Nairobi and bodies performing a similar function elsewhere. And when new laws are ignored the system’s lack of an enforcement and arbitration structure stand out all too clearly.

### ***Good governance practices***

UNEP, its founders, and its partners have devised a number of best practices in global governance, where fragile funding and lack of an enforcement mechanism make delicacy, efficiency, and management of public opinion crucial. The transparency of the environmental regime and its openness to civil society participation have unquestionably spread awareness and understanding of environmental problems. The regime constantly gathers more public support for international cooperation and taps the creativity of an ever-broader constituency. The number of NGOs participating in the environmental system has increased exponentially since the Stockholm Conference in 1972, when NGOs gathered for the first time to hold an “Envi-

ronment Forum." Over the years, NGO participation in the environmental field has strengthened considerably. Public-private partnerships have also taken root in the environmental field, yielding positive results in species conservation, water conservation, alternate energy, and other areas. Other models that can be studied and imitated include the structure, operation and leadership of the Secretariat of the Stockholm Conference; the integration of developing countries into the Montreal Fund; the integration of the scientific community into the policy forum of UN agencies, via the World Climate Research Program; the clustering of multilateral chemicals conventions; and the creation of scientific assessment capacity in developing countries through the UNEP Global Environmental Outlook process.

## **SYSTEMIC PROBLEMS**

### ***Outdated development model***

The environment is the foundation for economic and social well-being. But an outmoded development model, reliant on unbridled consumption and extraction to drive growth, has damaged the natural capital upon which all life on earth depends. Unfortunately, the dichotomy between economic growth and environmental protection is still lodged in the outlook of individuals and governments worldwide. Moreover, sustainable development, the paradigm for understanding the relationship between economic growth and environmental protection has largely failed to reform economic decision-making in the way originally intended. A new vision of an economy focused less on short-term rewards and externalized risk and more on long-term values of sustainability and social justice is needed.

### ***Outdated moral and ethical paradigm***

Implementation derives from motivation grounded in a basic system of ethical and moral principles. While science is an important tool for understand-

ing environmental problems, it cannot alone motivate action. An ethical foundation for concerted, collective global efforts at environmental stewardship is lacking. Without a common moral grounding, long-term environmental concerns cannot override short-term economic interest in determining national policy and attitudes.

### ***Policy-implementation disconnect***

With persisting disagreements about substantive and procedural norms, inadequate incentive mechanisms, insufficient capacity, and the absence of an authority whose decisions carry real force, a gap between a growing body of policies and decreasing implementation has emerged. Moreover, fierce protection of national sovereignty can wreck inter-governmental action on global problems.

### ***Fragmentation***

In the absence of clear goals, common vision, and effective communication and coordination, the increasing number of organizations, agreements, and instruments for global environmental protection has led to a highly fragmented system. As a result, UNEP's authority has eroded, governments and the public have lost policy control, priorities have been misplaced, and funding squandered.

### ***Lack of accountability***

In general, signatories to MEAs are able to breach the terms of the agreements with impunity. Environmental conventions have lacked strong provisions for non-compliance, and UNEP does not have a formal arbitration mechanism. In the absence of an enforcement mechanism and public pressure directed by NGOs, governments in both the industrial and developing world can duck responsibility for the environmental consequences of their actions. The lack of coherent performance metrics to evaluate the performance of international organizations is another facet of the same problem. With-

out a clear set of benchmarks, UNEP and its sister organizations can avoid, or at least postpone, reckoning with their donor states. UNEP's voluntary financing scheme makes it particularly vulnerable to dissatisfied donors and the gaps that can develop between diffident environmental goal-setting and a more precise domestic political calculus.

### ***Inadequate financial resources***

The allocation and utilization of financial resources throughout the global environmental governance system has been ineffective, inefficient and inequitable. UNEP's limited financing has precluded it from conducting effectively its role as coordinator and scientific assessor, much less to fulfill the operations obligations it sometimes assumes. The failure of industrialized countries to deliver on financial commitments and the residual resistance of developing countries to the responsibilities of sustainable development have led to a growing confidence gap and explain in part why budget constraints have strangled UNEP. But UNEP and

other intergovernmental organizations have compounded the issue by needlessly competing for funds and frittering funds on unfocused programs. This in turn has exacerbated the financial problems and precluded much environmental action from taking place.

### ***Capacity gaps***

Global environmental governance depends on effective implementation at the national level. But environmental ministries in many countries lack the financial structure and manpower necessary for implementing agreements. These shortages can also prevent countries from seizing the constructive opportunities that international mechanisms can provide. Governments may therefore be unable to implement their obligations under international environmental agreements even when they wish to. National environmental policy capacity is a necessary condition for effective environmental governance, and without it all the efforts of institutions at the global level will amount to little.

## ***VISION FOR MOVING FORWARD***

*"I think we know exactly what we want. We want a coherent, comprehensive, effective and efficient system that ensures that the natural resources are protected and used in a sustainable manner."*

Dr. Franz Perrez,  
Head of Section Global Affairs, Swiss Federal Office for the Environment



Most participants in Glion voiced support for the initial vision the founders of UNEP had. Their bold and clearly articulated idea of a body which can inspire and coordinate the environmental efforts of the UN system in managing resources and providing for future generations still holds tremendous power. At the conference, however, Neric Acosta of the Philippines approached the ideas behind

UNEP afresh. Acosta reminded the participants that six elements, six 'I's – information, institutions, infrastructure, integrity, inclusion, and imagination – need to be at the core of any comprehensive strategy to address current and emerging needs in global environmental governance. These points illustrate what UNEP has done correctly so far, and where it can still improve:

## 1. Information

Accurate, relevant, timely, and comprehensive information about environmental problems is critical. We need it to raise awareness, build public support, and target environmental policy efforts at critical problems. While an unassailable scientific foundation is necessary, it is not sufficient. An ethically and emotionally compelling presentation is also necessary to motivate action.

## 2. Institutions

Institutions underlie and shape our social interactions, from the local to the global level. They provide information, reduce transaction costs and make interactions among actors more predictable. They also shape values, and can promote common purpose. When architects of institutions keep the principle of form follows function in mind, their institutions are more likely to operate effectively and deliver results. And the ultimate design requirement for environmental problems is a system of institutions that can convey local concerns to a global

audience and allow global instruments to operate on a local level.

## 3. Infrastructure

Information and institutions will be irrelevant without the necessary infrastructure to communicate information and connect the beneficiaries, managers and donors. Functional global environmental governance will require information hubs, financial instruments, and policy frameworks, as well as corresponding infrastructure on a national and, ultimately, local level.

## 4. Integrity

The global environmental governance system must have integrity in both the physical and moral sense of the word. It must seamlessly bring together the disparate parts of the system, and the moral dimension of consistent values, actions, and outcomes. A system of integrity would thus be one where the parts fit into a whole and are held together by common principles, responsi-

Crafting a vision for moving forward.



bility, and values. Integrity ensures congruency between expectations and outcomes. In environmental governance, integrity implies a reverence for the Earth.

### 5. Inclusion

Maurice Strong's principle that "the process is the policy" emphasized the critical need for ownership of the process of institution-forming by the people affected by it. This "procedural legitimacy" was an important ingredient for the success of the Stockholm Conference. The results of the conference, precisely because they were seen as fair and inclusive, were treated as legitimate. A transnational, inclusive grassroots movement sustained by networks and internet communication will be necessary in the present day to open the political space required for substantive reform of the global environmental governance system and ensure its legitimacy.

### 6. Imagination

The capacity to imagine fundamental transformation and keep it in our minds as we negotiate the steps to our destination is absolutely vital. As Einstein wrote, "Imagination is more important than knowledge, for knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand."

## CORE FUNCTIONS, GAPS AND NEEDS

Since 1972, the tight coherence of UNEP's function, form and financing has come unwound. The current campaign for environmental governance reform has reaffirmed the "form follows function" principle. It has also reaffirmed the general vision of a coordinative, catalytic, and scientific environmental body. But there is no agreement on how to address



Dr. Maria Ivanova and Neric Acosta

clear gaps in the function of the current system; and so far we have no real consensus on what additional functions global environmental governance will have to perform in the future, much less on the division of labor within a new system.

The table below outlines a set of five core functions, based closely on the model system devised by UNEP's founders, which the parts of any future system must perform as a whole: 1) monitoring, assessment and early warning, 2) policy and norm development, 3) capacity development, 4) enforcement, and 5) coordination. The table identifies some of the main bodies currently performing these functions, outlines the gaps in their activities, and summarizes the areas where the need for augmented function is most urgent. This chart represents an important step in the process of reform. We cannot begin dialogue on the future division of labor and institutional arrangements until we have reached a consensus on where there are gaps today.

# FUNCTIONS, GAPS AND NEEDS IN GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

FUNCTIONS	RATIONALE	PERFORMED BY <sup>1</sup>	GAPS	NEEDS
<b>MONITORING, ASSESSMENT AND EARLY WARNING</b>				
<b>Collect and store data</b>	Monitor the state of the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- FAO</li> <li>- IOC</li> <li>- IPCC</li> <li>- OECD</li> <li>- UNDP</li> <li>- UNEP</li> <li>- UNESCO</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- WMO</li> <li>- World Bank</li> <li>- MEA bodies</li> <li>- NGOs and think tanks</li> <li>- Governments</li> <li>- Scientific research centers and universities</li> </ul>	Despite the existence of numerous initiatives, no systematic and comprehensive data collection takes place. Comparability of data across countries and institutions is inadequate.
<b>Develop indicators and analyze data</b>	Track trends, identify problems and highlight causal linkages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- FAO</li> <li>- IOC</li> <li>- IPCC</li> <li>- Millennium Ecosystem Assessment</li> <li>- OECD</li> <li>- UNDP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- UNEP Global Environmental Outlook</li> <li>- UNESCO</li> <li>- WMO</li> <li>- World Bank</li> <li>- Governments</li> <li>- MEA bodies</li> <li>- NGOs and think tanks</li> <li>- Scientific research centers and universities</li> </ul>	Multiple sets of indicators exist without a common analytical framework.  High quality, systematic data with cross-country comparability are necessary to support problem and causal linkages identification. Data quality control and assurance mechanisms are required to generate common understanding of existing and emerging problems. A science-policy interface is required to translate sound scientific analysis into policy options that are responsive to country needs.
<b>Manage and disseminate information</b>	Provide early warning and generate momentum for action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- FAO Global Information and Early Warning System</li> <li>- IPCC</li> <li>- ISDR</li> <li>- OECD</li> <li>- Platform for the Promotion of Early Warning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- UNDP</li> <li>- UNEP</li> <li>- UNESCO</li> <li>- WMO</li> <li>- World Bank</li> <li>- Governments</li> <li>- MEA bodies</li> <li>- NGOs and think tanks</li> <li>- Scientific research centers and universities</li> </ul>	Uncoordinated management and dissemination of information limits impact on policy. Numerous early warning initiatives are underway. However, developing countries that are the most vulnerable to disasters often lack the capacity to implement the technologically advanced systems.
<b>POLICY AND NORM DEVELOPMENT</b>				
<b>Provide a policy space</b>	Facilitate dialogue, negotiations and bargaining; synthesize a common vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CSD</li> <li>- UNEP Governing Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- International environmental summits</li> </ul>	Fragmented policy spaces that are delinked from other political areas (like trade and development) and that do not take sufficiently advantage of the innovation coming from civil society and business.

<sup>1</sup> The lists of organisations performing a particular function are not comprehensive but indicate select actors.

FUNCTIONS	RATIONALE	PERFORMED BY <sup>1</sup>	GAPS	NEEDS
<b>POLICY AND NORM DEVELOPMENT (Continued)</b>				
<b>Develop policies, rules and standards</b>	Provide policy guidance and exchange best practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- European Commission's Environment Directorate General</li> <li>- ISO</li> <li>- UNEP Best Practices and Success Stories Global Network</li> <li>- UNEP</li> <li>- WTO</li> <li>- Governments</li> <li>- Multinational corporations</li> <li>- NGOs</li> </ul>	Series of agreements and conventions have been developed but little has been implemented. No organization exists with the authority and ability to set standards in the environmental field. An accessible platform to share best practices is lacking	Common purpose, common objectives, and common concepts are necessary to facilitate the synthesis of a common vision. Political emphasis needs to be on creating capacity and demand for implementation. In this regard, a new moral theory for the environment is required, as ethical principles are ultimately the prime motivator for implementation. Focus on leadership and guidance. A platform for meaningful civil society and private sector participation and for exchange of best practices and lessons learned is required. Systematic and coordinated impact evaluations are needed to allow for a fundamental reassessment of existing policies.
<b>Policy impact evaluation</b>	Adapt to changes in environmental, economic, political circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- GEF</li> <li>- UNEP Global Environmental Outlook</li> <li>- WBSCD</li> <li>- Corporate Ecosystems Services Review</li> <li>- World Bank Independent Evaluation Group</li> <li>- Yale/Columbia Environmental Performance Index</li> <li>- Governments</li> <li>- NGOs and think tanks</li> </ul>	If at all present, policy impact evaluations are carried out by each agency separately. The lack of coordination limits the capacity for systematic policy revision.	
<b>Foster new leadership</b>	Provide moral guidance and ethical norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Business associations (e.g. Conservation International Center for Environmental Leadership in Business)</li> <li>- NGOs (e.g. LEAD)</li> <li>- UNEP Environmental Leadership Programmes</li> <li>- Universities</li> </ul>	In the environmental policy field, too little attention is paid to ethics. An authority that develops ethical norms for environment and sustainable development comparable to UNHCR or UNHCHR is missing. Existing initiatives lack a coherent vision.	
<b>CAPACITY BUILDING</b>				
<b>Develop institutional capabilities</b>	Enable implementation of environmental policies, norms and standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- UNDP</li> <li>- UNEP</li> <li>- UNITAR</li> <li>- NGOs</li> <li>- Governments</li> <li>- Private companies/consultancies</li> </ul>	Developing countries in particular are unable to address all the requirements of the many international treaties, including numerous meetings, cumbersome reporting, and development of national regulatory frameworks. They also lack the institutional capacity to implement. The funding base for capacity building efforts remains insufficient.	Developing countries need assistance to meet their objectives and obligations. Effective capacity building requires coordinated and adequate financial support, institution building, and investment in human capital development. At the same time, clear lines of accountability are necessary, including a standardized tracking

FUNCTIONS	RATIONALE	PERFORMED BY <sup>1</sup>	GAPS	NEEDS
<b>CAPACITY BUILDING (Continued)</b>				
<b>Generate intellectual capital</b>	Enable implementation of environmental policies, norms and standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- UNDP</li> <li>- UNEP</li> </ul> Environmental Education and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- UNESCO</li> <li>- UNITAR</li> <li>- NGOs and think tanks</li> <li>- Universities</li> </ul>	<p>No widely recognized center of gravity for environmental education and intellectual leadership. While environmental education in the North has gained momentum, no comparable development exists in the South.</p> <p>system in order to ensure the proper use of funds. Existing resources need to be used more efficiently in order to mobilise additional funding.</p>
<b>Mobilize economic resources</b>	Enable implementation of environmental policies, norms and standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- GEF</li> <li>- Montreal Ozone Fund</li> <li>- UNEP</li> <li>- World Bank</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Foundations</li> <li>- Governments</li> <li>- NGOs</li> <li>- Treaty based funds</li> </ul>	<p>Funds for environmental activities are limited (compared to development for example). Financial mechanisms are fragmented and even duplicative. Inefficient use of resources jeopardizes fundraising as money follows success.</p>
<b>Improve communication among stakeholders</b>	Raise awareness educate and advocate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- UNDP</li> <li>- UNEP</li> <li>- UNESCO</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Governments</li> <li>- NGOs</li> <li>- Universities</li> </ul>	<p>The urgency of environmental problems and the relevance of international environmental governance have not been communicated effectively. A compelling common narrative that could bring about behavioural and attitudinal change is missing.</p>
<b>ENFORCEMENT</b>				
<b>Monitor and verify compliance</b>	Identify leaders and laggards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- European Commission's Environment Directorate General</li> <li>- IAEA</li> <li>- IPCC</li> <li>- UNEP Enforcement and Compliance Unit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- World Conservation Monitoring Center</li> <li>- Yale/Columbia Environmental Performance Index</li> <li>- Governments</li> <li>- MEA bodies</li> <li>- NGOs and think tanks</li> </ul>	<p>The current system of accountability is failing. Compliance monitoring remains unsystematic. Convention secretariats often lack the authority and resources to verify reported information or to conduct independent assessments.</p>
<b>Provide incentives and disincentives/sanctions</b>	Remove obstacles to effective implementation and reward innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- UNFCCC</li> <li>- WTO</li> <li>- Governments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MEA bodies (e.g. Montreal Protocol Meeting of the Parties)</li> </ul>	<p>Reporting requirements need to be streamlined and compliance has to be verified in a comprehensive and systematic manner. Governments have to be held accountable internally and externally (for what they do to their own people and to the global community). Effective enforcement requires incentives, disincentives and penalties for non-compliance. A mechanism for mediation and the settlement of environmental disputes is needed.</p>
<b>Resolve conflict and settle disputes</b>	Ensure that justice is done	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ICEAC</li> <li>- ICJ</li> <li>- ICSID</li> <li>- Inter-American Court of Human Rights</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Law of the Sea Tribunal</li> <li>- NAFTA</li> <li>- PCA</li> <li>- WTO</li> </ul>	<p>A system of dispute settlement is lacking. Important environmental decisions are referred to economic institutions like the WTO. Moreover, only states can be sued or can sue in international courts.</p>

<b>FUNCTIONS</b>	<b>RATIONALE</b>	<b>PERFORMED BY<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>GAPS</b>	<b>NEEDS</b>
<b>COORDINATION</b>				
<b>Clarify roles and strengthen connectivity among UN agencies and other international organizations</b>	<p>Reduce redundancy, optimize resource utilization, and reduce response time</p> <p>Streamline policy development, capacity building and implementation efforts</p> <p>Ensure better integration of environmental concerns into economic policy and strategic planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CEB</li> <li>- EMG</li> </ul> <p>Predecessors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ECB/ACC/DOEM/IACSD</li> <li>- UN "Delivering as One" Initiative</li> <li>- UNEP</li> <li>- UN Energy</li> <li>- UN Oceans</li> <li>- UN Water</li> </ul>	<p>UNEP has the mandate for coordination but lacks the capacity to coordinate the numerous environmental and sustainable development activities of UN agencies, IFIs and MEA bodies.</p> <p>The current economic paradigm prioritizes profit and growth over ethics and sustainability. Environment and development are still perceived as opposites.</p>	<p>A functional environmental coordination mechanism – with adequate capital, competence and connectivity - is necessary. Some institutional clustering, consolidation or elimination might be required.</p> <p>A new appreciation for the environment as the anchor and foundation for economic activity is necessary in order to develop an economy dedicated to sustaining people, to sustaining communities, to sustaining nature rather than to sustaining itself.</p>

## ACRONYMS

ACC	Administrative Committee on Coordination	ISO	International Organization for Standardization
CEB	Chief Executives Board	LEAD	Leadership for Environment and Development
CSD	Commission on Sustainable Development	MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
DOEM	Designated Official on Environmental Matters	NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
ECB	Environment Coordination Board	NGO	Non-governmental organization
EMG	Environment Management Group	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization	PCA	Permanent Court of Arbitration
GEF	Global Environment Facility	UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
IACSD	Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency	UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
ICEAC	International Court of Environmental Arbitration and Conciliation	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
ICJ	International Court of Justice	UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
ICSID	International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes	UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
IEG	International environmental governance	WBCSD	World Business Council for Sustainable Development
IFI	International financial institution	WMO	World Meteorological Organization
IOC	Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission	WTO	World Trade Organization
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change		
ISDR	International Strategy for Disaster Reduction		

## AGENDA FOR ACTION

*“Empower people with the truth. The truth is the most powerful political force of change in the environmental domain.”*

Achim Steiner,  
UNEP Executive Director, 2006-present



Concrete, practical and realistic steps are essential to building momentum in the reform process. At the same time, a broad, transformational vision needs to inform all proposals for change. With a vision of a reanimated governance structure in mind, several classes of action that will spur real change from the local to the international level emerged throughout the discussions in Glion:

### **1. Foster Leadership**

Leadership is absolutely vital for success in any enterprise requiring people to coordinate their actions. We must remember that leadership will have to be present at all levels, from community organizers to national executives, to elevate the political status of the environment, generate media attention, and motivate reform. Core proposals in this area include:

- i. Identify champions** for environmental governance among prominent thinkers, political leaders, economic leaders and cultural leaders. They can be individuals as well as groups and organizations.
- ii. Establish and maintain a network of environmental leaders** to generate ideas, muster support for action, and develop capacity.
- iii. Connect generations of environmental leaders** at the national, regional and global

level through formal and informal programs and events on a regional basis.

### **2. Reframe the Environment-Economy Dichotomy**

Redefining the connection between the environment and the economy in a new paradigm for human progress will be essential. The traditional three pillars of sustainable development have to be modified. The environmental pillar must become the foundation on which the economic and social pillars can support the ‘roof’ of sustainable development. Core proposals in this area include:

- i. Establish a high-level commission to revisit the concept of sustainable development** and construct an intellectual framework for the environmental conference in 2012.
- ii. Create an environmental mediation group** as a joint UNEP-UNDP initiative to provide consultative services in areas of conflicting priorities.
- iii. Ensure that annual meetings of the G-8 and G-20 contain an environmental segment** to make political attention to the environment regular and dependable. Moreover, including environment togeth-

er with the economic and security issues usually addressed by these fora will link the issues conceptually and elevate the significance of the environment in the minds of politicians and the global public.

### 3. Cultivate Shared Values

Ultimately, the failure of the economic system to incorporate environmental concerns reflects a failure of values. Reorienting our moral and ethical values will be a necessary condition for change in our behavior towards the environment. A new ethic of global citizenship is also essential for effective, legitimate and equitable global environmental governance. Core proposals in this area include:

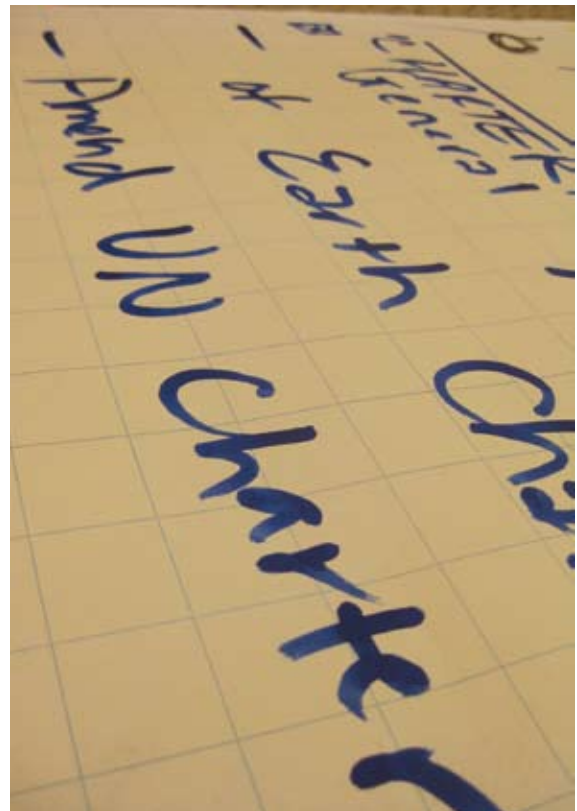
- i. **Launch a campaign on Chartering a New Course** to mobilize support for reforming the UN Charter. This might mean adding “protection of the environment” to the “Purposes of the United Nations” in Article 1, or promoting the adoption of the Earth Charter by the General Assembly. While these goals maybe seem ambitious, they are straightforward, easily communicated, and could be a powerful vehicle for raising awareness, political pressure and, ultimately, spreading a new set of values.
- ii. **Create a virtual global environmental governance learning space** to energize and put a face to the process of governance. This online platform would promote personal contact, the open exchange of teaching tools and materials, and learning from case studies of environmental governance, methodologies, and best practices.
- iii. **Convene and maintain an independent consultative group** to facilitate an open dialogue between North and South and

between governmental and non-governmental stakeholders; to develop new ideas; to illuminate value differences and gaps; and foster the development of a new ethic.

### 4. Animate Communication

The institutional structure of the United Nations and tangible, backyard environmental problems are not really connected issues for most people. Environmental governance advocates must establish this connection and launch a communications campaign to generate strong grassroots demand and support for improved environmental governance. Core proposals in this area include:

- i. **Second UNEP staff to other UN agencies and programmes** in order to deliver a message directly, continuously and effectively.



- ii. **Conceptualize and create a global environmental governance communication hub**, which harnesses existing information tools and resources through new communication technologies and provides a one-stop shop for up-to-date information on the state of the global environment, governance structures, policy mechanisms, projects, best practices, etc.
- iii. **Reframe the narrative**, in institutional accounts and in scholarly and published accounts, to place UNEP's intellectual and scientific focus in the context of more engaging and gripping story illustrating the connections between the local and the global, between planet and prosperity, and between governance and survival.

## 5. Develop an Analytical Foundation for Evaluating Governance

A sound analytical foundation for global environmental governance reform would require serious research of the successes, failures, and potential of existing structures as well as scenario development for immediate and longer-term change. Core proposals in this area include:

- i. **Review and rethink mandates and division of labor** among core international organizations in the context of sustainable development (UNEP, UNDP, CSD). Identify aspects of the existing structures that function well and compile explanatory analyses. Focus on UNEP's coordinating role among the secretariats of the various environmental conventions and create an analytical foundation for strengthening UNEP's coordination capacity.
- ii. **Devise performance metrics**, assessment methodologies, and communication methods. Create an environmental governance

scorecard allowing for comparability of governments' efforts, capacities and performance as well as for identifying priorities for investment where serious capacity gaps exist. Possible models are the Human Development Report produced by UNDP, the Environmental Performance Index published by Yale University and the annual Global Peace Index first published in 2007.

- iii. **Develop a mechanism to engage in issue-based cooperation** that could be applied to multilateral environmental agreements and international organizations.

## 6. Seize Opportunities

Political processes at various levels offer case-by-case opportunities to generate momentum behind the global environmental governance agenda. The Copenhagen Conference on Climate Change in 2009 represents one such chance to draw attention to the need for innovative global governance mechanisms. The fortieth anniversary of the Stockholm Conference and the twentieth anniversary of the Rio Earth Summit in 2012 also present a rare opportunity for politicians and the public to make a reckoning of their environmental priorities. Taking full advantage of these political openings will require careful groundwork and preparation. Core proposals in this area include:

- i. **Use the Copenhagen climate conference** and the momentum it will generate to develop *specifically* global climate change governance proposals, ensuring that an analysis of the obstacles and opportunities is accessible to policymakers and a wide public.
- ii. **Use the Belgrade process** – the high-level consultative group on international envi-

ronmental governance reform facilitated by UNEP – to develop and publicize proposals for new functions the international institutions might perform and options for reform of the system. An event dedicated to this sort of review at the UNEP Governing Council meeting in 2010 could bring fresh input into the intergovernmental discussions from the non-governmental community.

- iii. Launch a political process in preparation for 2012** and focus on: 1) declaring 2012 the international year of the environment; 2) dedicating the G-8 and G-20 meetings that year to the environment; and 3) convening a Special Session of the General Assembly on the environment during 2012.

## CONCLUSION

Participants in the Global Environmental Governance Forum expressed unanimous concern with the state of the planet and the ability of international environmental institutions to tackle global environmental problems. At the source of environmental degradation, they noted, is a consumption-driven economic model with fiscal, trade, energy, industrial, and agricultural policies that reward short-term growth rather than sustainable development. In addition, persistent mistrust between developed and developing countries and uneven capacities to tackle rapid environmental change impede the collective action necessary to address global environmental concerns. A pervasive disconnect between policy and implementation reinforces the lack of accountability for delivering on international commitments. Finally, a growing fragmentation of efforts has led to misplaced priorities, resistance to reform, and decreased effectiveness of international environmental institutions.

The political space opened up by climate change presents a critical juncture for innovative gover-

nance, transformative financing, and visionary leadership. The 2012 environmental conference (Stockholm +40, Rio +20) presents an opportunity for mobilization of a broad-based constituency for environmental governance reform through improved communications, and innovative outreach campaign. Concerted action, participants argued, would enhance confidence, mobilize human and financial resources and improve resource efficiency. It would also lead to improved planning and programming, augmented capacity, and greater accountability.

While opinions on institutional reform options varied, participants urged for bold, unflinching leadership to shatter stereotypes, create a climate of cooperation, and devise an analytically sound and morally grounded agenda for action. Such leadership would draw on the talent, enthusiasm, and energy of the new generations of environmental activists from around the world.

Ambassador John W. McDonald and Ambassador Lumumba Di-Aping engage with Emerging Leaders



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The Global Environmental Governance Project, a joint initiative of The College of William and Mary and the Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy aims to facilitate thought and action for strengthening environmental policymaking at the global level. Students and faculty conduct research that is theoretically based, empirically tested, and policy relevant. The Project provides a clearinghouse of environmental governance information for scholars, researchers, students, policy-makers, and diplomats. It also incorporates the knowledge generated by students at William and Mary and Yale.



[www.environmentalgovernance.org](http://www.environmentalgovernance.org)

