

- (xiv) To preserve threatened species of plant and animal life, particularly those which are important to human life and well-being;
- (xv) To help governments identify and preserve natural and cultural areas which are significant to their countries and which form part of the natural and cultural heritage of all mankind;
- (xvi) To help governments take into account in development planning the relationship between population growth, density and distribution and available resources and environmental effects;
- (xvii) To help governments increase public awareness through better education and knowledge of environmental concerns and facilitate wide participation in and support for environmental action.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE GENERAL DEBATE

Generally speaking, several representatives welcomed the report prepared by the Executive Director. Many representatives expressed their support for the general objectives laid down in the report. On the other hand, some representatives thought that the proposed Action Plan was too general and was not sufficiently action-oriented. Several representatives considered the UNEP to be the focal point in the United Nations system for co-ordinating all activities concerning environment. Some representatives suggested that a careful review of existing environmental activities within the United Nations system should be made in order to ensure co-ordination, fill gaps and avoid duplication. A number of representatives stressed that high priority should be given to the "Earthwatch" programme, comprising evaluation, research, monitoring and exchange of information on the state of environment. Several representatives recognized the need to study climatic effects and weather modifications arising from pollutants and other influences attributable to human activities. Several representatives expressed concern over the increasing pollution of the oceans by dumping of wastes and other matters. Some representatives emphasised

the importance of a global energy policy to meet the energy crisis. A few others referred to the question of natural disasters and suggested that studies should be carried out to determine possible methods of predicting and as far as possible mitigating the effects of catastrophies like droughts, storms, floods and seismic phenomena. Several representatives stressed the importance of improving the quality of life in rural and urban settlements. Some representatives suggested the establishment of an international fund or financial institutions to provide capital and technical assistance for the effective mobilization of domestic resources for housing and the environmental improvement of human settlements. Several representatives suggested that high priority should be given by UNEP to the formulation of a comprehensive programme of education and information regarding the environment. On the question of development of international law of the environment, the suggestion was made that the General Assembly should be invited to consider the codification and progressive development of environmental law and possibly to refer the topic to the International Law Commission.

At the seventeenth meeting on 22nd June 1973, the Governing Council adopted its first decision laying down the general principles which were to govern the process of the development of the Environment Programme.

With regard to the Earthwatch Programme,⁵ the Governing Council, *inter-alia* decided :

"that a monitoring system should be developed first for pollutants liable to affect weather and climate, and persistent and widely distributed substances liable to accumulate in living organisms and move through ecological systems, particularly along path-ways leading to man; and that internationally agreed upon Primary Protection Standards,

5. During the Stockholm Conference, it was decided that "Earthwatch" would be one of the three major components of the United Nations Environment Programme, the other two being management of the environment, and "supporting activities."

should be developed as a basis for assessing the significance of pollution levels for human health.⁶

As a first step in making arrangements for improving access to environmental information and data necessary to monitor and manage environmental resources and their use, the Governing Council authorised the Executive Director to initiate the Pilot Phase of the International Referral System drawing upon the expertise of both developed and developing countries and of international organisations concerned.⁷

Decision 2 (I) provided for the general procedures governing the operations of the Fund of the United Nations Environment Programme. Article VII clearly laid down that the Executive Director would have overall responsibility for the operations of the Fund, including direct responsibility and accountability to the Governing Council for the management and implementation of the Fund Programme in all its aspects.

Lastly, the Executive Director was requested to take note of the action taken in pursuance of the General Assembly resolutions 2998 (XXVII), 2999 (XXVII) and 3001 (XXVII) dealing with the problem of human settlements, particularly for the preparation of the proposed "United Nations Conference — Exposition on Human Settlements."⁸

The Report of the Governing Council was first submitted to the Economic and Social Council and subsequently to the General Assembly at its twenty-eighth session. The Assembly adopted the following resolutions on various environmental problems:

- (i) 3128 (XXVIII) : Conference — Exposition on Human Settlements;
- (ii) 3129 (XXVIII) : Co-operation in the field of the Environment concerning natural resources shared by two or more States;

6. See Decision I (1), Para 26.

7. See Decision I (1), Para 30.

8. Decision 4(1).

- (iii) 3130 (XXVIII) : Criteria governing multilateral financing of housing and human settlements;
- (iv) 3131 (XXVIII) : Report of the Governing Council of the United Nation Environment Programme;
- (v) 3132 (XXVIII) : Environment Fund;
- (vi) 3133 (XXVIII) : Protection of the marine environment.

By resolution 3133 (XXVIII), the General Assembly urged the Governing Council of the UNEP to consider and decide upon making a detailed survey of the living marine resources of the world's seas and oceans threatened with depletion, in co-operation with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations.

In conformity with Decision I(I) of the Governing Council, an Inter-Agency Working Group on Monitoring was established to prepare a report as a background paper for discussion at the 1974 Inter-governmental Meeting on Monitoring of Pollutant Levels.⁹ The Meeting was held at UNEP headquarters, Nairobi, from 11 to 20 February 1974. The meeting recommended a set of objectives and principles, programme goals and general guidelines.¹⁰

Programme goals provided the focus for a global environmental monitoring system covering:

- (a) An expanded human health working system;
- (b) An assessment of global atmospheric pollution and its impact on climate;

9. The members of the Working Group included representatives of WHO, WMO, UNESCO/IHD, IOC, FAO, IMCO, IAEA and UNEP. For the Report of the Working Group see Document UNEP/IG. 1/2 of 15 November 1973.

10. See Document UNEP/GC/24 or UNEP/IG. 1/4, 21 February 1974.

- (c) An assessment of the extent and distribution of containments in biological systems, particularly food chains;
- (d) An assessment of critical environmental problems relating to agriculture and land and water use;
- (e) An assessment of the response of terrestrial ecosystems to pressures exerted on the environment;
- (f) An assessment of the state of Ocean pollution and its impact on marine ecosystems;
- (g) An improved international system allowing the monitoring of the factors necessary for the understanding and forecasting of disasters and the implementation of an efficient warning system.

Another meeting of experts serving in their individual capacity but nominated by Governments was held from 4 to 6 March 1974 to discuss the status and possible future of an International Referral System.¹¹ The experts emphasised the importance of the IRS as the basic information exchange element on the specialised management functions of the UNEP. It was stressed that the successful implementation of action in the priority subject areas of the UNEP depended on the efficient operation of IRS activities in particular and of these specialised management facilities as a whole.¹²

Second Session of the UNEP

The second session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme was held in Nairobi from 11 to 22 March 1974. After the consideration of the organisational matters, the discussion in the Governing Council centred around the programme activities of the UNEP.

11. The International Referral System (IRS) was instituted as a pilot project of the UNEP in conformity with the decisions at first session of the Governing Council.

12. See Document UNEP/GC/25, 11 March, 1974.

In his speech at the opening meeting on 11 March 1974, the Executive Director described the progress made in the UNEP's programme activities since the first session. He felt that it would not be feasible to work out a comprehensive programme covering the whole broad range of priority areas as outlined in the first session's report of the UNEP. He, therefore, urged the Governing Council to suggest a relatively small list of priority areas in which the UNEP could concentrate its activities. He proposed for consideration such specific activities as:

- (a) Development and dissemination of environmentally sound technologies, with special emphasis on water treatment, waste disposal and re-cycling, building technologies, as well as environmentally sound techniques for pest control;
- (b) Measures for preventing loss of soil through desertification, erosion and salination, and for restoring the productivity of marginal lands;
- (c) Investigation of and support for pilot projects exemplifying alternative patterns of development which are environmentally sound — e.g. "eco-development;"
- (d) Measures for preserving the marine environment, with special emphasis on monitoring and control of land-based sources of ocean pollution particularly river discharges;
- (e) Measures for the conservation of genetic resources of plant and animal life as well as micro organisms which are important to the well-being of man;
- (f) Training and technical assistance particularly focused on helping Governments of developing countries to establish national environmental policies and machinery for integrating environmental considerations into their national development plans and programmes as well as helping them to participate in and derive full benefits from Earthwatch;

- (g) Support for the development of environmental education and dissemination of environment information to various sectors of the public with particular interest and needs;
- (h) Implementation of the first phase of Earthwatch, including the global environmental monitoring system and the International Referral System;
- (i) Assessment to provide guidance for decision making in certain key ecological regions such as the Mediterranean sea, the Caribbean sea, South Pacific island regions, tropical rain forest regions of central Africa or South America and arid areas of the Middle East, Asia and/or Africa.

Other Subjects to which the Executive Director drew attention included following:

- the possible need for international arrangements in respect of activities which could lead to significant modification of the climate;
- the elaboration of the new rules for international law regarding the environment;
- the environmental implications of various alternative patterns of energy production and use.

A brief summary of the ensuing debate in the Governing Council is set out below under different headings:

(i) **Human settlements and habitat:**

A large number of delegations stressed the need for making the total human settlements programme more effective and adaptable to the urgent problems of today. It was generally felt that uncontrolled urban development could have serious socio-economic consequences. It would make the living conditions of the inhabitants extremely difficult and cause irreversible damage to the environment. Some delegations pointed out that the UNEP Programme did not place sufficient emphasis on

rural settlements development. It was urged that UNEP should examine the factors influencing rural-to-urban migration and remedy the imbalances that cause this dramatic exodus.

In relation to human settlements technology, the greatest emphasis was placed on environmentally sound building design, low-cost and self-aid schemes, innovative and environmentally sound methods of waste disposal, and supply of pure and quality water.

It was stressed that UNEP should consider human settlements problems from a geographical and regional standpoint, since the differences in temperate and tropical zones were such that a global approach would have less impact.

(ii) **Human health and well-being:**

Several delegates expressed concern about endemic diseases, which were caused mainly by sectors with a water-borne phase. They called for concerted efforts to develop programmes for the eradication of those diseases.

There was general agreement on the importance of the WHO Programme for the development of environmental health criteria and standards, including toxicological and epidemiological research and the identification of new and potential pollutants. It was urged that WHO and FAO should give high priority to their programmes on the establishment of food standards.

Many delegates urged the early establishment of an international register network of potentially toxic chemicals and supported the idea of convening an expert group to explore the feasibility of such a register.

With regard to the environmental effects of agricultural chemicals, several delegations stressed the need for the development of an integrated programme of the pest control. It was recognised that the problem was not lack of knowledge, but rather lack of transfer of existing knowledge to the developing countries which needed it. The suggestion was made to initiate pilot projects by groups of countries for testing new

methods of pest control by non-chemical techniques and for providing training in the application of those methods.

(iii) Land, water and desertification

It was suggested that UNEP should adopt a global and multi-disciplinary approach to studying ecosystems, analysing the interaction of the characteristic physical, biological and socio-economic factors in a given ecological region. It was felt that UNEP should co-ordinate and collaborate fully with Specialised Agencies, such as UNESCO and FAO, in their activities relating to arid and semi-arid lands and other biotopes. It was suggested that UNEP should closely associate with the Man and Biosphere (MAB) Programme of UNESCO in its projects relating grazing land and irrigation.

Attention was drawn to the relative impact of human activities and climatic changes on ecosystems and on the process of desertification. It was stressed that climatic factors should be fully taken into account in planning the development of arid and semi-arid lands.

It was felt that since a great deal of work was already in progress on water quality, both within and outside the United Nations family, UNEP's role should better be confined to co-ordination. However, this should not prevent UNEP in playing a more active and innovative as well as co-ordinating role in matters of water quality.

(iv) Trade, economics, technology and transfer of technology

It was stressed that the cost of environmental protection measures in developed countries should not be passed on to developing countries. Several delegations emphasised the important role UNEP could play within the United Nations system in relation to economic matters, technology and its transfer, eco-development and other related fields.

It was pointed out that any attempt to impose new discriminatory environmental standards on developing countries was not acceptable. The need for the definition of standards with respect to environmental consideration was expressly

recognised. However, it was pointed out that, while product standards might be internationally agreed upon, environmental standards could be established on a regional or climatic basis, and countries should be free to implement them.

(v) Oceans

Several delegations urged the need for UNEP to co-ordinate the activities of the numerous agencies concerned with the marine environment. It was felt that UNEP should concentrate on the protection of the marine environment, and should be extremely selective in its choice of programmes, in order to avoid duplication. There was a general view that monitoring of the marine environment was an essential component of the programme of work in this particular area. Some delegates referred in particular to the monitoring of persistent toxic pesticides. Some delegates stressed the need for more assessments on a global basis concerning the state of the oceans and suggested for a comprehensive oceanic research programme covering physical processes occurring in the oceans and the effects of marine pollution on living marine organisms. Reference was also made to study ocean dynamics as a factor in pollution transport. Some considered that the programme should include a study of behaviour of pollutants in warm waters.

There was general consensus that regional agreements or conventions for the protection from pollution of specific bodies of water, such as the Mediterranean, the Persian Gulf, the Caribbean, the South Pacific and the Malacca Straits, constituted an effective means for the control of marine pollution as well as the conservation of living resources in these areas. It was therefore stressed that UNEP should encourage and support the preparation of such conventions.

In relation to the control of land-based sources of marine pollution, emphasis was laid on the need to take account of the input of pollutants discharged from the land, rivers and estuaries. Some delegates advocated maintenance of a registry of clean rivers.

Many representatives pointed out that a number of conventions concluded for the protection of the marine environment had not yet come into force because of delays in their acceptance by States. It was felt that UNEP should urge Governments to hasten that step.

Several delegates urged the Governments to exert more control over the demand for endangered species and their products. Some delegates felt that financial compensation could be a means of reducing their trade. A few others thought that research should be undertaken to develop artificial products which could replace animal products deriving from those groups of animals.

Several delegates stressed the importance of marine national parks, where studies of marine habitats could be encouraged for the conservation of marine ecosystems. The data on marine pollution collected from these parks might serve as a background for the establishment of marine parks in other parts of the world.

Many delegates emphasised the need for the States to accept, as soon as possible, the Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. It was felt that UNEP might work out, in co-operation with UNESCO, ways of promoting acceleration of the process of acceptance of this Convention.

(vi) Energy

The general view was that in order to avoid duplication of effort, the UNEP's action programme in the field of energy should be of limited scope. Accordingly, it was felt that UNEP should concentrate only on the environmental aspects of energy covering two distinct but inter-related components: (1) the environmental impact of the generation and use of energy, and (2) the availability of energy, with emphasis on the potential of alternative sources such as solar energy, wind, geothermal energy and gas production from agricultural and other organic waste-sources which might be relatively non-polluting in character. Some delegates singled out atomic energy as a great potential

source for the fulfilment of future energy needs. In their view, the expertise of International Atomic Energy Agency could be most useful in preparation of such programmes.

At the conclusion of the general debate, the Governing Council adopted several decisions concerning its programme policy and fund programme.

By its Decision 5 (II) the Governing Council approved the programmatic approach as outlined by the Executive Director. The Governing Council authorised the Executive Director to design, develop and begin to implement the global Environmental Monitoring System for monitoring priority pollutants.¹³ It decided that the UNEP, in co-operation with the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation and other relevant bodies of the United Nations System, should assign high priority in global Environmental Monitoring System to the monitoring of radio-nuclides resulting from nuclear tests.¹⁴

Without going into details of the other decisions which mainly deal with the organisational matters, it may be stated that the second session of the UNEP made some real progress. The broad and rather ambitious framework of programme activities planned in the first session were narrowed down considerably keeping in view the resources of the UNEP.

13. Decision 8(II), Para 2.

14. Decision 9(II), Para 3.