

Chairperson, distinguished delegations, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen.

I am grateful for this opportunity to present, on behalf of Dr Klaus Topfer, Executive Director of UNEP, the outcome of the recently concluded 23rd session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum.

The session took place in Nairobi from 21 – 25 February, last week. It was attended by approximately 1500 people, including the Vice Premier of the Peoples' Republic of China, HE Mr Zeng Peiyan, and officially opened by the President of the Republic of Kenya, HE Mr Mwai Kibaki.

The session was preceded by a 2 day meeting of Chief Justices and legal experts from a variety of countries, who met on 16 and 17 February to consider the linkages between the MDG's and respectively environmental law, multilateral legal instruments - including compliance measures – and national capacity building requirements. The Chief Justice of France presented the outcome of their meeting to Ministers attending the GC/GMEF, emphasizing that legal frameworks serve not only sustainable development but especially sustainable environmental management.

The annual UNEP Civil Society Forum -- a meeting of NGOs, trade unions, youth and women groups and indigenous representatives -- took place immediately prior to the GC/GMEF, on 19 and 20 February. The final communiqué focused on gender, climate change, mercury, the Millennium plus 5 Summit and the CSD topics of water, sanitation and human settlements.

The first 3 days of the GC/GMEF consisted of Ministerial consultations. Ministers and senior government officials from 133 member states of the United Nations considered the environmental underpinnings related to the MDG's and specifically goals:

- 1- the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger,
- 3 – the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women,
- 7 – ensuring environmental sustainability.

At the conclusion of their deliberations the Ministers were unanimous in their conviction that prioritized actions were necessary to ensure that environmental sustainability was a central component for the successful implementation of the MDG's. Ministers also underscored that sustainable use of the natural resource base and responsible environmental management practices were prerequisites for development.

The outcome of the 3 day Ministerial session is reflected in a President's Summary and contains specific recommendations for the international community and national governments. It also reflects on further actions to be taken by UNEP. The President of the GC/GMEF, HE Mr Rachmat Witoelar, Environment Minister of Indonesia, will formally transmit his summary to CSD 13. An advance, unedited version of the Summary, as well as the other GC/GMEF decisions has been made available to interested delegations in the back of the room.

The GC/GMEF also adopted a number of decisions of key importance. These related to the outcome of the Mauritius International Meeting on Small Island Developing States, and how it will be mainstreamed into UNEP's work programme over the next biennium. Another dealt with the Indian Ocean Tsunami disaster and the early warning systems required to prevent a reoccurrence of this tragedy.

UNEP's 2006-7 work programme and budget was approved, at a 15% higher level than the previous biennium. A decision on the International Environmental Governance process underscored the full funding and implementation of UNEP's Bali Strategic Plan on Technology Support and Capacity Building, which will be pursued through the recently concluded Memorandum of Understanding between UNEP and the UNDP. Another new decision dealt with environmental housekeeping in the United Nations system, focusing on environmental and equity considerations in terms of UNEP's procurement practices.

A comprehensive decision on chemicals management, including lead in gasoline and mercury containment, was also adopted and should serve to inform future CSD sessions. UNEP's revised water policy was approved, and will be implemented and reviewed, in consultation with all governments, over the next 18 months, taking into account the outcome of CSD 13 and the Millennium plus 5 Summit..

The GC/GMEF was a very successful meeting, involving a record number of countries and participants, and UNEP is convinced that its outcome will contribute in a meaningful manner to CSD13 and the forthcoming session of ECOSOC. The challenge to the United Nations system has seldom been greater and in an era predominated by security concerns we should always remember that future generations require not only a world safe from fear, but one where clean water and air, growing forests, blue oceans and sustainable life exist in tandem with respect for nature.

Thank you Chairperson.