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[trade.env@EcoLomics-International.org](mailto:trade.env@EcoLomics-International.org)

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## UNEP 1972-1992 AND THE RIO CONFERENCE

*Urs P. Thomas*

PhD Thesis  
(Political Science, Université du Québec à Montréal, 1992)

Original title:  
The United Nations Environment Programme –  
An Evaluative Analysis

[Links to the TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

Urs P. Thomas  
6307 rue Beaulieu  
Montréal H4E 3E9 PQ  
Tél. (514) 767-6220

UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC A MONTRÉAL

THESIS

SUBMITTED

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

BY

URS P. THOMAS

THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME -  
AN EVALUATIVE ANALYSIS

DECEMBER 1992

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Urs P. Thomas  
6307 rue Beaulieu  
Montréal H4E 3E9 PQ  
Tél. (514) 767-6220

UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC A MONTRÉAL

THÈSE

PRÉSENTÉE

COMME EXIGENCE PARTIELLE

DU DOCTORAT EN SCIENCE POLITIQUE

PAR

URS P. THOMAS

LE PROGRAMME DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT -  
UNE ANALYSE ÉVALUATIVE

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## PREFACE

To Anna Alice

*The important thing in thinking  
about international affairs is  
not to make moral judgements  
or apportion blame  
but to understand the nature  
of the forces at work  
as the foundation for thinking  
about what, if anything,  
can be done.*

George F. Kennan

This quotation is used by Lawrence S. Finkelstein (Editor)  
at the beginning of his book  
*Politics in the United Nations System*,  
Durham N.C., Duke University Press, 1988, 503 p.

Doing a PhD on the United Nations Environment Programme seemed inevitable to me. Having worked for fifteen years in imports and exports of various commodities, I decided on a professional recycling and did a B.Sc. in Environmental Biology and an MBA in International Business. Once I had that and forty years behind myself in the summer of 1984, I wanted to do a PhD on administrative and political aspects of the environment at the international level; that seemed to pull together my previous activities. UNEP was the obvious choice.

At that time there was not much literature available on international environmental affairs. Lynton Keith Caldwell fittingly titled his 1984 book *International Environmental Policy - Emergence and Dimensions*. The promotion of the sustainable development paradigm through the publication of the Brundtland Report *Our Common Future* in 1987 shook up the UN system. The same year saw the realization of the Montreal Protocol on ozone depletion and the creation of the World Bank's Environment Department. The Rio Summit six months ago achieved a vast

media exposure. Several journals have been created in the field over the last few years, and books and articles have mushroomed - what a change.

This research would not have been possible without the numerous interviews I was privileged to be able to do at the secretariats of UNEP and many other UN organizations, as well as at several ministries and embassies, and with various experts in this field. I am greatly thankful to all these persons.

Last but not least, doing this kind of research based on a transdisciplinary, novel approach requires an understanding and open minded PhD director. I was lucky to have found, in the person of Kenneth Cabatoff, someone who was always good-humoured, encouraging and ready to give me his time and assistance. He helped me to apply evaluation research methods and to develop the notion of UNEP's organizational domain throughout the thesis. This happens to be a particularly pertinent operative concept at a time of strategic change which UNEP is undergoing presently. Thanks very much Kenneth!

## RÉSUMÉ

Cette thèse se veut une étude de cas politico-administrative portant sur le Programme des Nations Unies pour l'Environnement (PNUE) qui représente en quelque sorte le <<Ministère de l'environnement>> des Nations Unies, sauf que son mandat n'est pas opérationnel mais catalytique. Le PNUE peut être considéré comme le centre d'un réseau global d'institutions et de programmes dans ce domaine. Il possède un budget d'approximativement 100 million US\$ qui a plus que doublé dans l'espace des deux ou trois dernières années, indiquant clairement que vingt ans après sa création à la Conférence de Stockholm la communauté internationale est satisfaite de sa performance.

Cette recherche empirique se base partiellement sur des entrevues ayant eu lieu au secrétariat du PNUE à Nairobi, à plusieurs autres secrétariats onusiens et à certains ministères. La complexité de cette institution a rendu nécessaire une approche transdisciplinaire. Un cadre de référence innovateur a été développé. Il est basé sur les sous-disciplines de la recherche évaluative, de la théorie des relations interorganisationnelles, des organisations intergouvernementales et des affaires environnementales internationales. Le concept du *domaine organisationnel* a permis de créer une cohésion méthodologique entre ces domaines, et il s'est avéré comme particulièrement pertinent compte tenu des changements que subit l'organisation en ce moment.

En effet, la participation du PNUE au *Fonds mondial pour l'environnement* avec un budget qui dépassera bientôt un milliard de dollars par an (conjointement avec la Banque mondiale et le PNUD), l'impact de la Conférence de Rio, et l'annonce de la retraite de son directeur exécutif depuis 16 ans, le Dr. Tolba, ont grandement contribué à mettre un terme à la première phase de cette institution.

La promotion du paradigme du développement durable par la publication du *Rapport Brundtland* en 1987 a eu un effet fondamental sur le système onusien en général, et le PNUE en particulier. Ce principe est à l'origine de la convergence des programmes d'aide en environnement et en développement. Cette convergence est avantageuse pour l'évolution du PNUE, mais en même temps elle a attiré de nouveaux compétiteurs dans son domaine organisationnel avec lesquels il doit apprendre à coopérer, tout en étant en concurrence avec eux pour des fonds, des programmes et des projets.

Dans ce nouveau contexte qui caractérise le début de la deuxième phase du PNUE, son défi majeur est de maintenir sa bonne réputation dans ses activités traditionnelles, et en même temps d'améliorer sa fonction de coordination, en s'approchant davantage des centres de prise de décision politique et économique onusiens, tout en gardant et renforçant le soutien des pays en développement.

## ABSTRACT

This is a case study of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the "Ministry of the Environment" of the United Nations system. Contrary to the UN's specialized agencies, its mandate is not of an operational but of a facilitating, catalyzing and coordinating nature. Consequently it cooperates with a large number of institutions and programs on a daily basis, it can be considered as the linking-pin of a vast global environmental network. Its budget consists mostly of voluntary contributions from member countries and has more than doubled over the last couple of years in spite of difficult times to reach approximately US\$ 100 million per year; this increase can be interpreted as a recognition by the international community that UNEP is effective on the whole in a crucially important domain.

The main difficulties in an empirical evaluation of UNEP consist in the fact that its activities and organizational linkages are spread all over the world. Furthermore, the nature of its organizational context, i.e. the United Nations system, and the interdisciplinary character of environmental issues make this analysis extremely complex. To deal with these complexities, a cross-disciplinary epistemological framework was developed and applied which is based on the meshing of the literatures of Program Evaluation/Evaluation Research, Organization Theory, Intergovernmental Organizations, and International Environmental Affairs. The literature in these four subdisciplines was complemented with interviews at UNEP's and the UN's secretariats and at many of the cooperating agencies, and with internal documents. The *organizational domain* was found to be a powerful analytical concept in the analysis of political, economic and institutional conflicts and negotiations. It provides a link between these four methodological approaches and helps to arrive at empirically meaningful conclusions which can be connected with theoretical research.

After a discussion of the political conflicts which complicated the creation of UNEP, the thesis analyzes the redefinition of UNEP's domain through four major strategic initiatives which UNEP's Governing Council undertook over the past few years:

1. A comprehensive policy document called 'The Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond' brought UNEP in the mid-1980s into direct competition with the World Commission on Environment and Development which in 1987 published the *Brundtland Report*. The Report's promotion of the sustainable development paradigm had and still has such a decisive impact on official development assistance that UNEP's effort fell by the wayside. Since then, however, UNEP has

- managed to become part of the sustainable development movement and to benefit from it as an institution.
2. In 1989 UNEP finally managed to narrow down its domain which at its creation was made unrealistically wide for reasons of political expediency; it emerged with a North-South reconciliation of its priorities based on the Brundtland Report and a better focus on issues related to the atmosphere, the oceans, fresh water, terrestrial resources, toxic transports, and biodiversity.
  3. In 1991 UNEP lost control over the UNCED process but it gained a much more explicit inclusion of developmental issues in its mandate.
  4. The second cycle of UNEP's coordination blueprint, the 'System-Wide Medium-Term Environment Programme 1990-95' has to be considered its major failure, it has never been able to assume an effective coordinating function.

The role of the secretariat, analogous to other UN bodies, was found to be much more influential on UNEP's decision-making process than its administrative and supportive mandate would indicate. The voluntary nature of most of its funding gives it, and the executive director in particular, a heavy responsibility - and at the same time a great deal of leeway.

UNEP's just retired chief Dr. Mostafa K. Tolba is an unusual personality; he has been at the helm of UNEP for the last 16 years during which he has had an overwhelming impact on the organization's evolution. He is often criticized for being overbearing and for making the geographical isolation of the Nairobi location worse by concentrating decision-making there more than necessary. This is seen here as the major reason for UNEP's failure in its coordinating mandate which would be an uphill battle under the best circumstances in view of the specialized agencies' fiercely defended autonomy. On the other hand, however, this evaluation concludes that Dr. Tolba deserves great credit for establishing institutional legitimacy for UNEP through the promotion of an environmental consciousness throughout the UN, as well as in diplomatic circles and the world-wide media. On balance, Dr. Tolba has been successful in finding the right balance in the very difficult and sensitive trade-off between forceful environmental advocacy and diplomatic pragmatism.

After a discussion of the principal environmental coordinating mechanisms which link UNEP with the UN system, the analysis focuses on the emergence of a new constellation of UNEP's domain resulting from the creation of the billion dollar Global Environment Facility (GEF), UNEP's joint program with the World Bank and UNDP, from the newly created Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), and from the attempts to resuscitate a top-level sustainable development coordinating taskforce under the chairmanship of the UN Secretary General. These innovations have been

brought about and are driven to a large extent by the increasing importance of international regimes in the wake of the UNCED process. Indeed, the 1992 Rio Conference resulted in a resurrection of the New International Economic Order, but this time the developing countries incorporate their demands in environmental concerns which gives them a considerably higher leverage.

Until a few years ago, the World Bank and UNDP had manifested little interest in environmental issues. Now, however, billions of dollars are available for international environmental affairs, and competition for these funds is becoming intense. The notion inherent in UNEP's mandate that it would be able to exercise a significant coordinating function on the movement of these funds, far removed from the political and economic decision centers in its Nairobi secretariat, is not realistic.

The *Brundtland Report* has catalyzed a convergence of environmental and developmental issues. The Rio Conference, and the decision in the fall of 1992 of UNEP's executive director to retire, have together clearly marked the end of the first phase in UNEP's history. At the beginning of its second phase, UNEP's new leadership faces geopolitical problems and opportunities which are unprecedented. The fact that the UN's relatively small Environment Programme managed to join the World Bank and UNDP in the formation of the GEF consecrates its maturity as a respected and effective UN institution. UNEP's principal challenge for the 1990s will be to continue its successful programs, and to move its coordinating functions closer to the political and economic decision-making centers; at the same time it needs to maintain and to strengthen its political support from the developing countries by helping them to implement truly sustainable development policies.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ACABQ	Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (UN)
ACC	Administrative Committee on Coordination (UN)
CCIS	Advisory Committee for the Coordination of Information Systems
AMCEN	African Ministerial Conference on the Environment
APELL	Programme on Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies at Local Level (UNEP)
BAPMoN	Background Air Pollution Monitoring Network
BPPE	Bureau for Programme and Policy Evaluation (UNDP)
CCSQ(OPS)	Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational Activities) (UN)
CFCs	Chlorofluorocarbons
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (World Bank)
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CIDIE	Committee of International Development Institutions for the Environment
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
COPA	Cross-Organizational Programme Analysis (ECOSOC)
CPC	Committee for Programme and Coordination (UN)
CSD	Commission on Sustainable Development (UN)
DESCON	Consultative Group for Desertification Control
DOEM	Designated Officials for Environmental Matters
EAIO	Environmentally Active International Organization
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council (UN)
EMGs	Environmental Management Guidelines (UNDP)

EMINWA	Environmentally Sound Management of Inland Waters
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific
ESMAP	Energy Sector Management Assistance Programme (UNDP)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GEF	Global Environment Facility (World Bank, UNDP, UNEP)
GEMS	Global Environmental Monitoring System
GESAMP	Group of Experts on Problems of Marine Pollution
GIS	Geographical Information System
GRID	Global Resource Information Database
HEALs	Human Exposure Assessment Locations
IAWGD	Inter-Agency Working Group on Desertification
IBPGR	International Board for Plant Genetic Resources
ICC	International Chamber of Commerce
ICDA	International Coalition for Development Action
ICEL	International Council on Environmental Law
ICSU	International Council of Scientific Unions
IDA	International Development Association (World Bank)
IEA	International Environmental Affairs
IDWSSD	International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade
IEEP	International Environmental Education Programme
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFI	International Financing Institution
IGADD	Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development
IGBP	International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme
IGO	Intergovernmental Organization
IHP	International Hydrological Programme
IIASA	International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMO	International Maritime Organization
INC	Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IOC	International Oceanographic Commission

IOE	Industry and Environment Office (UNEP)
IOR	Interorganizational Relations
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPCS	International Programme on Chemical Safety (UNEP)
IRPTC	International Register for Potentially Toxic Chemicals (UNEP)
ISRIC	Int. Soil Reference and Information Centre
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
MAB	Man and Biosphere Programme (UNDP)
MARC	Monitoring and Assessment Research Center (London, GEMS)
MDB	Multilateral Development Bank
MEDPLAN	Mediterranean Action Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OAS	Organization of American States
OCA/PAC	Ocean and Coastal Areas Programme Activity Center
ODA	Official Development Assistance
ODS	Ozone Depleting Substances
OPFP	Ozone Layer Protection Policy Framework Paper (UNDP)
OPS	Office for Project Service (UNDP)
PACD	Plan of Action to Combat Desertification
PEEM	Panel of Experts on Environmental Management for Vector-Borne Diseases
PIC	Prior Informed Consent
PPSC	Programme and Programme Support Costs (UNEP)
RDB	Regional Development Bank
RSP	Regional Seas Programme
SCOPE	Scientific Council on Problems of the Environment (ICSU)
SDN	Sustainable Development Network (UNDP)
STAP	Strategic and Technical Advisory Panel (GEF)
STAS	Short-Term Advisory Services
SWCC	Second World Climate Conference (Geneva 1990)
SWMTEP	System-Wide Medium-Term Environment Programme (UNEP)
TCDC	Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (UNDP)
TFAC	Tropical Forest Action Plan

TJP	Thematic Joint Programming
UNCED	UN Conference on Environment and Development (Rio Conference 1992)
UNCHE	UN Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Conference 1972)
UNCTAD	UN Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNESCO	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	UN Fund for Population Activities
UNIDO	UN Industrial Development Organization
UNITAR	UN Institute for Training and Research
UNSCEAR	UN Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation
UNSO	UN Sudano-Sahelian Office (Desertification)
USAID	US Agency for International Development
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission)
WCIP	World Climate Impact Studies Programme
WCP	World Climate Programme
WDC	World Data Center on Micro-organisms
WFC	World Food Council
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WICEM	World Industry Conference on Environmental Management
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WRI	World Resources Institute
WWF	World Wildlife Fund
WWW	World Weather Watch
ZACPLAN	Zambesi River Action Plan

## INTRODUCTION

This thesis presents a case study of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)<sup>1</sup>. Its principal purpose consists in an *evaluative analysis* of this institution. UNEP is characterized by four major features:

1. The world-wide promotion of the sustainable development paradigm by the 1987 publication of the Brundtland Report *Our Common Future*<sup>2</sup> forced UNEP to take increasingly the meshing of environmental and developmental issues into consideration.
2. UNEP is not an executing agency, it has a facilitating, catalyzing and coordinating mandate. This means that its activities are spread very thin, but they are interlinked dynamically with a very large number of cooperating agencies and programs.
3. As a UN body, it is embedded in all the specific aspects of the UN system, particularly the division between the North and the South, which is made more complicated by the developments in the East.
4. Environmental issues are inherently of a cross-disciplinary nature which has profound institutional implications. For example, the protection of the atmosphere and of biological diversity both depend on the protection of tropical rainforests.

None of these characteristics is unique to UNEP, but each of them tends to complicate its mandate and its activities. The combination of these four factors results in an organization of *extraordinary complexity*. This makes this case study of interest from a political and functional as well as from a theoretical standpoint.

The *problématique* of the thesis can be divided up into four research questions:

1. In the wake of the publication of the Brundtland Report, UNEP participated with the World Bank and UNDP in the creation of the billion dollar joint program called Global Environment Facility (GEF); what is the strategic implication of this emerging constellation for UNEP?

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<sup>1</sup> UN documents use both the US spelling 'program' and the British spelling 'programme'. The US spelling will be used here except in agency names such as the UN Environment Programme.

<sup>2</sup> *Our Common Future - The World Commission on Environment and Development*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1987, 400 p.

2. How can UNEP be more effective in carrying out its environmental coordination mandate in the face of the very pronounced autonomy of the UN's specialized agencies?
3. What were the critical problems and opportunities at UNEP's creation at the 1972 Stockholm Conference, and how did the process of its institutionalization lead to a redefinition of its domain in the context of continuing North-South tensions?
4. How can UNEP be most effective in contributing to the implementation of *Agenda 21*, a comprehensive blueprint for sustainable development adopted at the 1992 Rio Conference?

The *objective* of the thesis is to analyze and to evaluate UNEP in the light of these research questions. The need for an in depth evaluation is particularly great at this time, because it is now twenty years old. More importantly, it is presently adjusting to a major changeover in leadership: Dr. Mostafa K. Tolba, who announced his retirement in the fall of 1992, has been its executive director for the past 16 years. Furthermore, in the wake of the June 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio, the UN institutions involved in sustainable development are undergoing profound changes. UNEP is one of these institutions. A good understanding of the evolution of its organizational domain and of its position within the UN system is essential for the analysis of the institutional aspects of multilateral development and the protection of the international ecosystem. UNEP's new executive director, Elizabeth Dowdeswell is indeed facing a period of strategic change.

As far as the structure of the thesis is concerned, we shall begin our analysis with a presentation of the theoretical framework. The discussion of UNEP will begin with its emergence as a new institution and then focus on its legislative body, the Governing Council, and on its secretariat. Subsequently, an analysis of UNEP's links with the UN system will lead to a strategic analysis of its competitive situation in a new joint venture with the World Bank and the UN Development Programme. We shall conclude with an evaluation of UNEP's catalyzing function. Finally, an extensive annex provides a synthetic overview of UNEP's various activities.

Due to UNEP's facilitating mandate, we shall put particular emphasis on the discussion of the UN system as a global organizational network. The fact that international environmental agreements are seen by the international community as increasingly urgent has made more and more money available for these purposes, especially in order to help developing countries to protect their own environment, as well as natural resources such as the oceans or the atmosphere which are called the global commons. UNEP has benefitted from this trend, but at the same time it has to live with the fact that competition for these funds has intensified, and that as a result its domain is more

and more being invaded by other organizations with whom it has to learn to cooperate and to compete at the same time.

In order to evaluate this cooperation and competition we have to establish first of all what UNEP really does. Its programs and projects are of an extraordinary variety. UNEP divides them up into the three groups of assessment programs, management programs, and support measures<sup>3</sup>. Since the term 'support measures' is very vague, four categories were found to be more pertinent. They can be called *the four "c"s*:

- *compiling*, assessing and disseminating scientific information;
- *convincing* the world community of the necessity to take active measures to protect the environment;
- *catalyzing* specific programs, projects and agreements;
- *coordinating* international environmental policies.

The focus in this thesis is put on institutional aspects of cooperation and coordination in international environmental activities. In order to appreciate their scope and their ramifications, it is necessary to be familiar with UNEP's *12 major subprograms*. At the same time, however, most of these do not need to be included directly in the analysis of UNEP's strategic issues, that is why they were put in a 12-part annex.

A brief comment should be made to introduce the institutional actors in this research. The UN system consists mainly of 'specialized agencies' such as UNESCO or FAO which are very autonomous because they have their own governing bodies and fundraising mechanisms, and of 'programs' (or 'Programmes') which in most cases report to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). These programs are much less autonomous although some of them were equipped by the General Assembly with one or several funds for voluntary government contributions. This is very much the case for UNEP, in fact it obtains most of its budget that way. These and similar institutional mechanisms between governments are called intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), in order to separate them from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international NGOs (INGOs), such as the World Resources Institute.

UNEP's above-mentioned complexity made a *cross-disciplinary epistemological framework* necessary. This approach is very common in poli-

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<sup>3</sup>. Page 40, *UNEP 1985 Annual Report*, Nairobi, 1986, 246 p.

tical science: "Like sociology, but unlike economics, political science makes a considerable use of findings, ideas and models taken from other disciplines" (Laponce, 1990). The following four subdisciplines turned out to be useful and pertinent for this research:

1. Program Evaluation/Evaluation Research Theory,
2. Organization Theory,
3. Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) Theory,
4. International Environmental Affairs.

Evaluation Research Theory provided the construct of the *organizational domain*; this is really the operative analytical concept which constitutes the glue holding these four fields together. The two subdisciplines of International Relations - Intergovernmental Organizations Theory (Groom, 1988), and International Environmental Affairs (Stavis, Assetto and Mumme, 1989) - are still young, especially the latter, but they have received increasing attention over the past few years.

We can now connect and interrelate the four chosen subdisciplines, the nature of the four different kinds of complexity UNEP has to deal with, and the four research questions. It should be emphasized, however, that these relationships only indicate the principal thrust of the investigation, in reality the cells of this table are all more or less interconnected:

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE THESIS

MOST APPLICABLE SUBDISCIPLINE	NATURE OF COMPLEXITY	PROBLÉMATIQUE: 4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS
----------------------------------	-------------------------	---

EVALUATION RESEARCH THEORY  ----- INTER- ORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONS (IOR)  ----- INTER- GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (IGOs)  ----- INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS (IEA)	IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM  ----- UNEP AS A DYNAMIC FACILITATOR ORGANIZATION  ----- INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, DIPLOMACY, UN SYSTEM  ----- ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES ARE CROSS- DISCIPLINARY	UNEP AS PART OF GEF: DOMAIN IMPLICATIONS  ----- EFFECTIVENESS OF UNEP'S COORDINATION MANDATE  ----- UNEP'S EVOLU- TION WITHIN NORTH-SOUTH CONFLICT  ----- UNEP'S CONTRIBUTION TO IMPLEMENT <i>AGENDA 21</i>
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## CHAPTER 1

### **THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This chapter explains the choice and usefulness of Evaluation Research and Organization Theory as the theoretical framework for the analysis of UNEP's constraints and strategy with a particular emphasis on the organization's coordination activities. Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) have not received much attention in this literature although some of the conceptual tools developed by theoreticians in these two fields are very useful for research on the United Nations system. It is necessary, however, to adjust these tools to the specificities of this very unique organizational context.

#### 1.1. The Problem of Evaluating Intergovernmental and Intersectoral Coordination Activities

Evaluation Research traditionally deals with domestic institutions in the socio-economic sphere. This is particularly true for Program Evaluation which represents a focused form of this subdiscipline of Public Administration. In evaluating the United Nations Environment Programme we have to deal with problems which make the evaluation unusual in many respects:

- the activities of the organization are spread out over the whole world, and they are directed from a secretariat located in Nairobi which obviously causes difficulties in gaining access to the organization's staff;
- because UNEP is essentially a facilitating organization which depends on the UN's specialized agencies and on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) for the implementation of projects, it is very difficult to determine in any given case how credit and blame should be distributed between UNEP and its implementing partners;

- its activities are highly diverse and nearly always unquantifiable; cannot be standardized, are usually complex, crosssectoral, interdisciplinary, and holistic; and are often diffuse and invisible; e.g. the help it provides to developing countries in setting up a Ministry of the Environment;
- the time horizon is long-term which makes it very difficult to determine when a judgement can be made on the fulfilment of its objectives.

#### 1.1.1. Can UNEP BE Evaluated?

For all these reasons the question has to be asked: is it possible at all to evaluate UNEP? UNEP as an institution is by no means unique in this regard, program evaluators very commonly conduct an evaluability assessment before they start with the task of evaluating an organization. Rossi and Freeman (1985:87) for instance consider that an evaluability assessment "should precede any typical evaluation effort". This evaluability perspective depends largely on the goal of the evaluation, for instance if the program evaluation is carried out by a monitoring agency of the government, one may stipulate as Rossi and Freeman do that the evaluation requires the cooperation of the program staff and of relevant policymakers. In the case of an academic research such constraints of course do not apply, what matters in the case of UNEP is a strategy which will take into account the obstacles mentioned above.

Not only does the evaluability perspective depend on the purpose of the evaluation, the term 'program evaluation' itself, according to one of its principal theoreticians is not clearly defined: "The term 'program evaluation' does not have a standardized and commonly accepted meaning. Rather, there are widely different interpretations of the term" (Rutman, 1980:17). Rutman is mainly interested in measuring the effectiveness of operating programs. For all the above-mentioned reasons, this can not be the purpose of the evaluation carried out here. However, Rutman points out other goals (p. 20) which may necessitate a program evaluation, namely gaining information for purposes such as allocating resources, exercising accountability and formulating policy.

This research is pertinent for these goals. That is not just a theoretical reflection to confirm the evaluability of UNEP - the US State Department has indeed concluded that UNEP *can* be evaluated, it has conducted an evaluation of UNEP with the purpose of determining to what extent UNEP benefits the United States (Drake, 1987). In the thesis of course the emphasis will be different, it will be focused on putting UNEP into the context of its network, i.e. the UN system, and on UNEP's dealing with the constraints which are inherent in this system. This will allow us to reach policy recommendations with regard to UNEP's position in the network, and more particularly with regard to its coordination mandate. Last but not least, in addition

to Rutman's goals of accountability and resource allocation, another purpose served by this thesis is a better understanding of coordination in the domain of environmental affairs and sustainable development throughout the UN system.

### 1.1.2. Evaluation Methodology and Techniques Applicable to UNEP

Evaluation research, like other research in the social sciences, may use either an inductive, usually qualitative, or else a hypothetico-deductive, usually quantitative epistemological approach (the term 'epistemology', or theory of knowledge, is being used here, as is often the case, indistinguishably from the term 'methodology' (Kaplan, 1963:20)<sup>4</sup>). Clearly, the present research falls into the inductive category, i.e. the theoretical discussion is induced from preceding observations in the field. Essentially, we are dealing here with a very large case study characterized by a particularly complex relationship between the institution and its organizational environment.

In keeping with the inductive method of evaluation, we shall let the important dimensions of the analysis *emerge* from the empirical investigation without any presuppositions.<sup>5</sup> The emphasis in this approach is on the empirical investigation and on judgmental inferences, not on the establishment of a necessary, logical chain of causality as in the deductive method (Rossi and Freeman, 1985:91; Emory, 1980:40).

As pointed out in the previous section, the evaluation of UNEP presents a number of challenges which make it impossible to use many of the traditional evaluation techniques. We are faced here with a predicament which is vividly described by Daft (1983:539) in his essay on organizational research:

What techniques can be used to obtain significant new knowledge about organizations? Those who do not answer in quantitative or qualitative terms would argue that significant new knowledge is the outcome of something deeper. Research involves basic attitudes and ways of thinking. Research is a craft. Like other crafts, activities are not analyzable. Cause-effect relationships are not clear. Unexpected

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<sup>4</sup> Without going into this debate, it should be pointed out that other authors do see a difference between epistemology and methodology.

<sup>5</sup> Professor Marvin S. Soroos, (North Carolina State University), who was one of the members of the jury committee for this thesis, has pointed out in his comments that in an inductive approach the theoretical discussion should not be placed at the beginning since it *emerges* from the analysis. This comment is well taken. The theory chapter was left at the beginning, however, because PhD theses in the social sciences are normally structured that way.

problems appear. Procedures are not available to describe each aspect of research activity.

The main difficulty in evaluating UNEP is the fact that it is not an autonomous organization responsible for the implementation of a number of programs and projects, but a facilitating mechanism located at the center of a truly global network of UN bodies which are all involved to some extent in international environmental affairs. Rossi and Freeman (1985) have shown how this problem can be turned into a research strategy: the key is to consider organizations with whom UNEP cooperates as its most knowledgeable and informed stakeholders which can be relied upon to give an assessment of UNEP, based on their experience of working with it on a regular basis. This notion of stakeholders is the foundation of what they call *reputability assessment* (p. 99):

We use the term 'reputability assessments' to refer to systematic efforts to obtain from relevant stakeholders, particularly targets, opinions and experiential data on which to judge the extent of a program's success in meeting its objectives. Reputability assessments basically consist of obtaining 'market' information on a program.

In the evaluation of traditional programs the reputability assessment is usually just one among several concerns of the researcher. In the case of UNEP however, the "product" which the organization produces is mostly an intangible set of motivations, initiatives and political will that UNEP tries to create within the cooperating organizations. Consequently, *assessing UNEP means essentially assessing its reputability among these organizations.*

Semi-structured interviews were the technique used for obtaining the opinion of individuals who either have frequent contacts with UNEP or whose professional activities and experience allowed them to become knowledgeable about UNEP's functioning - including of course some of UNEP's own staff. Since many discussions touched upon matters which may be sensitive with regard to the relations between the institutions involved, complete confidentiality was always assured to the interviewees, and tape recorders were never used. Many of the interviews yielded not only information and insight but also extensive internal documentation.

The majority of the interviews were conducted with UN officials, but there were also a number of talks with government officials, with some members of NGOs, and with a few academics. Access to UN and government officials turned out to be fairly easy in most cases except for the UN secretariat in New York and the Gigiri compound in Nairobi where security measures made it necessary to obtain an identification card. The toughest scrutiny was encountered at the US Permanent Mission to the UN in New

York. Over a hundred interviews were conducted between 1988 and 1992 at the following organizations (in roughly chronological sequence):

- Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization
- Paris: UNEP (Industry and Environment Office)  
UNESCO  
International Council of Scientific Unions
- Geneva: World Health Organization  
World Meteorological Organization  
UN Industrial Development Organization  
UN Institute for Training and Research  
UNEP liaison office  
Economic Commission for Europe  
GATT  
International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
- Berne: Swiss Environment Department
- Nairobi: UNEP secretariat  
Environmental Liaison Center International  
High Commission of Canada  
Embassy of Norway
- Ottawa: Institute for Research on Public Policy  
Environment Canada  
External Affairs Canada  
Canadian International Development Agency  
Friends of the Earth
- New York: UN secretariat  
UNEP liaison office  
United Nations Development Programme  
UNITAR  
UNCED secretariat  
Permanent UN Missions: Canada, Germany, US,  
Norway, Switzerland
- Washington DC:  
World Bank  
US Environmental Protection Agency

State Department  
UNEP liaison office  
Organization of American States  
US Committee for UNEP  
Friends of the Earth  
World Resources Institute  
Center for the Development of Intern. Law

Montréal: UNEP (secretariat, Ozone Fund)

Since interviews played such an important part in this research, it is worthwhile to discuss this research technique. For practical reasons, it was never possible (or necessary) to arrange for meetings by correspondence, usually telephone calls on arrival a short time before the meeting were sufficient. In some instances meetings could be arranged on the spot. The first interviews were usually the most difficult part, because in a large organization it is often not easy to find someone with the right kind of knowledge. Obviously, when one arrives at an institution for the first time, one can't know its internal structure and the functions of its various components. Furthermore, on trips there is nearly always time pressure for cost reasons. Therefore, obtaining quick initial access to some of those persons who have the right kind of information is crucial for fruitful interviewing. With some luck, interviewees would sometimes suggest other people to contact. This inductive, often exploratory kind of research is necessarily not very systematic, and it is somewhat unpredictable.

One of the inherent problems in interviewing in this milieu is the fact that we are dealing here with a category of busy people who spend a great portion of their working time travelling or in meetings, which makes it often difficult to arrange a rendezvous. The public relations departments were hardly ever contacted - a significant exception was the one at UNEP's secretariat which was very helpful. The assistance of secretaries, on the other hand, was often much appreciated, for instance in locating people of interest.

The hierarchical level of the interviewees turned out to be meaningless as far as the value of the interview is concerned. What matters much more is the establishment of a good rapport with the interviewee. Some interviewees would take the initiative and be very forthcoming in providing information. Others, on the contrary, would sit back and ask for specific questions. On the whole, the responses could be divided up into two categories: informative ones and insightful ones. The informative ones include those which might be dubbed "the company line", i.e. they are quite defensive and avoid problems and controversies as much as possible. These interviews are useful only when the interviewer is not yet familiar with the institution and its context. Really insightful responses are more difficult to obtain. Generally, they are

only provided when the interviewee realizes that the interviewer is already familiar with the subject.

Interviewees were assured complete confidentiality, and a notebook was used instead of a tape recorder. These notes were reviewed after the interview, and written up and filed electronically at home. I consider tape recorders to be appropriate only for the informative kind of interviews. Insightful interviews, on the other hand, tend to be sensitive, and interviewees might very well keep their most interesting observations for themselves if they are faced with a microphone. The relationship between institutions is in most cases quite sensitive, and coaxing a personal assessment out of interviewees regarding these relationships is one of the biggest challenges in the evaluation of institutions.

Due to the subjective nature of personal assessments, and due to the impossibility of verifying objectively or documenting statements which may be crucial, it is very important to corroborate them otherwise. Potential biases based on the interviewee's interests, outlook or institutional affiliation obviously have to be taken into consideration at all times. The policy for this research has been, to ignore personal opinions and subjective assessments unless they were corroborated independently by other sources. In controversial issues, e.g. in the implications of UNEP's Nairobi location, in the question whether UNEP should become a specialized agency, or in the discussion of a more decentralized coordinating function, both sides are presented and my own conclusion is argued and explained.

In retrospective, this research technique proved to be highly fruitful and pertinent. In some institutions it would have been desirable to have more time available. A notebook computer to type up the interviews immediately after the encounters would be helpful. A lesson learnt was that it is a good idea to do the most important interviews towards the end. This way one can benefit from acquired knowledge in order to elicit as much insight as possible.

The literature on evaluation methods and techniques tends to deal mainly with programs which provide standardized social services, such as professional training or child care. Program evaluation handbooks focus largely on services which can be measured quantitatively and treated statistically, and for which 'flow models' (Rutman, 1980:93) or conceptual models of data collection procedures and sources can be designed and prescribed (e.g. Rutman and Mowbray, 1983:65). The evaluation criteria are often based on various kinds of norms or standards (e.g. Patton, 1984:42) which in reality can only be applied to very specific kinds of programs, certainly not to complex, intertwined and diffuse ones like UNEP. At the other end of the spectrum, Kay and Jacobson (1983) have coordinated pioneering studies on international environmental programs and institutions addressing issues like ocean dumping, radioactive waste disposal and land-based marine pollution.

They comment on the traditionally narrow focus of most of the program evaluation literature as follows (p. 314):

In the evaluation field itself, which until recently has focused exclusively on domestic activities, the major focus has been on activities of a project type. It is generally acknowledged in the evaluation literature that program and institution-level evaluations present the most difficulties for analysis. Therefore our criteria for measuring effectiveness and success, and efforts to apply these remain very much in the nature of a first approach to this difficult methodological problem.

So far, program evaluation theoreticians have not much developed methods and techniques for the evaluation of diffuse and complex programs that do not implement standardized services, in spite of the fact that analytical techniques to gather and evaluate different kinds of information have greatly evolved over the last twenty years. The most important reason for this heightened interest in program evaluation is probably the need for elected and appointed officials to face unstructured and threatening issues from nuclear safety to urban decline for which traditional approaches of dealing with socio-economic development have not prepared them (Lynn, 1980). The field of program evaluation has responded with the refinement of analytical techniques, but more research needs to be done to articulate research strategies for the evaluation of programs which provide preventive, awareness-rising and facilitating services.

In the rare cases where such issues are raised, no method of evaluating programs proposing to deal with them is provided. For instance, Berk and Rossi (1990:36) discuss the serious economic ramifications of replacing CFCs with 'ozone-friendly' chemicals and call for a careful evaluation of programs aimed at addressing this global environmental problem. They do not even begin, however, to provide any methodological guidelines. This means that for the time being researchers will have to develop their own methods and techniques to deal with these problems. It should be added that publicly accessible literature on evaluating intergovernmental programs is nearly inexistent. In this sense the present thesis is not only a case study in an institutional sense but it is also innovative in terms of epistemological practice.

### 1.1.3. The Linkage between Evaluation Research and Organization Theory

Organization theory has been defined as:

...a group of related concepts, principles, and hypotheses that is used to explain the components of organizations and how they behave. It can thus have both descriptive and predictive aspects. This means that organization theory can help us understand what organizations are, how they behave in given environment, and how they might behave in a different set of circumstances" (Hodge and Anthony, 1984:6).

According to Hodge and Anthony, following are the eight components of organization theory:

- goals
- work
- power and authority
- size and complexity
- organizational design
- adaptation and change
- boundary and environment
- technology

As we have seen, UNEP's activity consists essentially in dealing with other organizations. In order to analyze the relationships between organizations, the Organization Theory subdiscipline of '*Interorganizational Relations*' (IOR), has developed the conceptual tools which are useful here. The most pertinent element for an analysis of UNEP on Hodge and Anthony's list is undoubtedly the concept of '*boundary and environment*'. UNEP's environment contains, among other things, all organizations with whom it is cooperating, and the study of IOR is included in this particular element of Hodge and Anthony's epistemological approach.

Levine and White (1960) have introduced the concept of the *organizational domain* which they define as follows (p. 594):

The domain of an organization consists of the specific *goals* it wishes to pursue and the *functions* it undertakes in order to implement its goals.

The concept of the organizational domain is of paramount importance for the evaluation of UNEP, in fact it provides the analytical link between evaluation research and organization theory: the assessment of the functions which an organization undertakes in order to realize its goals is at the core of program evaluation. At the same time, the discussion of an organization's domain is of particular importance for an organization which acts as a facilitator in a network of organizations, a problématique which is at the center of Interorganizational Relations. We shall see as the analysis of UNEP prog-

resses that the concept of its domain is the leitmotif of the thesis which will surface repeatedly, especially in discussing its creation and emergence as an institution, and in assessing UNEP's competitive positioning compared to other actors in the UN network.

One of the most important results of the June 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro is the increasing awareness among all UN bodies that they have to reconsider the environmental impact of their activities; the adoption of the sustainable development paradigm forces them to reassess not only many of their practices but also many established patterns of interagency cooperation. UNEP is very much involved in this restructuring process, and with it the discussion of its organizational domain.

## 1.2. Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) in an Organizational Perspective

This section first explains the pertinence of organization theory for the study of intergovernmental organizations. Then the general concepts of organizational policy and organizational configurations as they were developed by the organizational theorist Henry Mintzberg are applied to the particular case of UNEP. Finally, the focus is put on interorganizational relations theory; it is found to be the most appropriate part of organization theory for an organizational analysis of UNEP.

### 1.2.1. Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) and Organization Theory

The use of organization theory as a conceptual framework to analyze intergovernmental organizations is still in its infancy (Joensson, 1986:39). As an explanation, one may surmise that autonomy of IGO secretariats tends to be underestimated in the International Relations literature which often does not distinguish between the secretariats and the governing bodies of the UN's specialized agencies. Holly's (1985) and De Senarclens' (1985) studies of the UNESCO secretariat are some of the exceptions to this observation. Even though they don't use organization theory explicitly, both emphasize the autonomy of UNESCO's secretariat. Another reason for the rarity of such studies is the fact that these organizations, especially the UN secretariat, tend to make access to their staff difficult due to security considerations.

The first major organizational study of an intergovernmental organization, namely the International Labour Organization (ILO), was done by Haas (1964). He used organization theory in order to elucidate the interface between the organization and its context. He described how a strong sense of commitment, and an enterprising leadership with great sensitivity to

the organization's environment can actually transform this environment to make it more amenable to the organization's mission.

Le Prestre (1982) used organization theory in order to study the World Bank's policy with regard to the protection of the environment. Since his thesis shares with this one an interest in both the natural and the UN environment, it is of particular interest. He analyzes the external constraints on the World Bank on one hand, and its internal determinants and adaptive strategies in the field of the environment on the other hand. His conclusion is that the Bank has made some progress in the implementation of sustainable development practices, e.g. in soil conservation, including training, but on the whole the World Bank in 1982 was still very much dominated by its traditional core technology, namely the appraisal and evaluation of projects according to techno-economic criteria.

Rather than using its considerable resources proactively and preventively, the World Bank reacted to environmental problems such as deforestation as they came up. Also, in spite of its geographically comprehensive mandate and in spite of the transboundary nature of many environmental problems, the Bank at that time had not managed to improve international cooperation among developing countries. Even internally, the Office of Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OESA) had great difficulties in convincing other departments of the necessity to take into account the long-term environmental impact of their projects (Le Prestre, 1982:390).

Like Haas (1964), Le Prestre (1985) emphasizes the organization's power to exert a certain degree of influence on its environment. In a later study of the World Bank he analyzes its success in "Controlling the Milieu" (1989:118). Weick (1969) called this the *enactment process*. It is based on a proactive approach in dealing with the environment. The organization thus gives meaning to its environment based on what it deems to be important for the realization of its own goals.

Does this proactive orientation apply to UNEP? Certainly much less than to the World Bank, which as holder of the purse strings is in a far more powerful position towards its clientele. However, UNEP can and does try to win influence through educational activities. Le Prestre notes (1985:36): "Education, or the cultivation of understanding and attitudes, is the strategy of the weak". What makes UNEP's position even weaker in comparison to the World Bank is the fact that it has to rely largely on other organizations in its educational activities (mostly on UNESCO), as it does in most of its endeavours. In any case, true to its role as a catalyst, UNEP doesn't transform the environment by itself, but it facilitates and speeds up the transformation process. UNEP's core technology, or 'center of gravity' as Galbraith (1983) calls it, is of a very different nature. *Diplomacy* might be considered to be UNEP's most basic skill.

In 1987 the World Bank underwent a general reorganization<sup>6</sup> which resulted in the replacement of the Office of Environmental and Scientific Affairs by a much larger Environment Department and four Regional Divisions. The effect of this change, i.e. the organizational processes and their impact on the Bank's clientele would be an interesting topic for future organizational studies (Le Prestre, 1989:202).

Organization theory is far too vast to be considered as an operational research methodology. Rather, it is a body of knowledge which may guide the analytical approach of a research. Gordenker and Saunders (1978:86) provide some epistemological guidance for this selection:

In trying to establish the relevance to international organization of organization theory, its vast writings can conveniently be divided into three categories. The first of these involves personal behaviour within organizational structures. The second deals with structures and functions themselves. And the third concentrates on the relationship of organizations to their environment.

The third category is the subject area of Interorganizational Relations (IOR). Since UNEP's mandate requires extensive working relations with other UN organs, IOR theory seems to be the obvious choice as a research methodology for analyzing UNEP's constraints, strategy and coordination.

The decision to use IOR theory for the study of intergovernmental organizations is supported by Gordenker and Saunders (1978:100). Joensson (1986:40) is very explicit about the pertinence of IOR for the study of international organizations:

The proliferation of organizations raises the generic problem of interorganizational relations. I agree with Gordenker and Saunders (1978) that, among the variety of organization theories, those which focus on the relationship of organizations to their environment - especially to other organizations - seem most relevant to students of international organization.

Gordenker and Saunders in 1978 considered this domain to be neglected by organization theorists which explained to them the lack of interaction among political scientists and organization theorists. The 1980s have seen an increase of research in this field; nevertheless, as Ness and

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<sup>6</sup>. The World Bank and the Environment, First Annual Report, Fiscal 1990, The World Bank, Washington DC, 1990, 102 p.

Brechin (1988:245) have pointed out, even now there is still little interchange between political science and organization theory.

Ever since organizational scientists opened up the view of organizations as closed systems as it was presented in the classic studies of their predecessors such as Taylor, Fayol or Weber (Guiot, 1980:45) they have expanded the organization by looking beyond organizational boundaries. This open system view of the organization started with Barnard's (1938) seminal study of informal and process-oriented organizational phenomena, and takes into account the researcher's limited power of intellectual comprehension in the face of staggering complexities, a phenomenon which Simon (1957) called *bounded rationality*.

Through this concept, Simon indicates that decision-makers must act with incomplete and unreliable information. Furthermore, "the" goal of organizations and of specific decisions is usually complex:

It is easier, and clearer, to view decisions as being concerned with discovering courses of action that satisfy a whole set of constraints. It is this set, and not any one of its members, that is most accurately viewed as the goal of the action (Simon, 1964:20).

The organizational environment often becomes so vast and complex that Dill (1958) created the concept of *task environment* to identify those parts of the environment which are "relevant or potentially relevant to goal setting and goal attainment". Levine and White (1961) use the term '*domain*' for those "claims which an organization stakes out for itself" in terms of services it renders and clientele it covers.

Thompson (1967) has extended these analytical tools by introducing the notion of *domain consensus*: "Domain consensus defines a set of expectations both for members of an organization and for others with whom they interact, about what the organization will and will not do (p. 29)". In the case of UNEP domain consensus is particularly difficult to establish due to the vast scope of its mandate and also due to the considerable number of other UN organizations with partially overlapping mandates. These problems with domain consensus result in turf fights which are by no means limited to UNEP. Rather, they are endemic throughout the UN system, and they are common in large, complex bureaucracies.

In a more recent study, Joensson (1986:44) relates organizations, specifically IGOs, to their environment by distinguishing between 'issue-area', 'issue structure' and 'issue setting'. *Issue-area* simply refers to Levine and White's domain and to Dill's task environment, for instance it may indicate whether an issue has military implications. *Issue structure* on the other hand refers to the distribution of power or to polarization, e.g. to the North-South

conflict. *Issue setting* finally refers to the context in which a specific issue evolves.

He gives the example of IGOs which may be able to influence the agenda of a conference by using their connections with member governments. This concept is of interest to UNEP because many interviewees have indicated that its former executive director Dr. Tolba enjoys numerous personal connections at the highest government levels, and that he uses these to focus attention on his perception of environmental issues during international negotiations.

In the fulfilment of their mandate, organizations have to make different kinds of decisions. Cox and Jacobson (1981) have described seven kinds of decisions which are pertinent for IGOs. The decision-making process is seen by them as a spectrum ranging from the conception of policies to their implementation. At the policy end of the spectrum there are the representational decisions about membership on internal bodies and the structure at the top echelons, for instance the tradition at UNEP that the executive director's two deputies used to be a US and a Soviet citizen. Symbolic and boundary decisions about relations with other UN organizations are particularly crucial for a catalytic organization like UNEP. These are so important for UNEP's activities that they usually require the approval of the UN General Assembly or of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) which is the UN's highest coordinating organ.

Programmatic and rule-creating decisions are reflected in the organizational strategy and the allocation of resources. Rule-supervisory and operational decisions finally, at the implementation end of the spectrum, determine whether certain procedures are to be seen as strict or vague. For UNEP they are mostly vague because the large number of different projects and programs does not allow the establishment of standardized procedures. An interesting observation made by Cox and Jacobson is that operational decisions may, as they accumulate and form certain patterns, lead to foregone programmatic decisions.

Institutional, symbolic, boundary and programmatic decisions lead an organization to the acceptance of commitments which may be difficult to reverse. These more or less irreversible commitments express the values in an organizational structure and define what Selznick in his classic treatise on leadership (1957:40) called 'organizational character'. Values are a crucial element for Selznick, they form the underpinning for effective leadership. He considers organizations as expendable tools which merely coordinate activities consciously. When they are infused with value, however, (p. 17) they become 'institutions'.

Institutions are the products of social needs and pressures, they are less expendable than mere organizations. At the same time, this absorption of value creates a resistance to change. Selznick's insights into organizational

character are still valid after more than 30 years; UNEP for instance has managed to embody the UN system's environmental consciousness. It is generally recognized - inside and outside the UN - as the primary vehicle for international environmental cooperation.

The notion that an organization's strategy is largely dependent on external constraints is reflected in what is known as the *Contingency Theory* (e.g. Hodge and Anthony, 1984). This influential theory posits that the 'fit' between an organization's structure and processes and the characteristics of its organizational environment is crucial for its survival and effective functioning. Authors like Emery & Trist (1965), Katz & Kahn (1966), Lawrence & Lorsch (1967) and Thompson (1967) are considered to be the main founders of Contingency Theory. They have had a profound impact on modern views of complex organizations: "mechanical, legalistic and constitutional approaches to organizations shifted to more organic, behavioral, and empirical approaches" (Ness and Brechin, 1988:249, n.11). This highly dynamic view of organizational phenomena is very pertinent to IGOs.

Lawrence & Lorsch (1967) stress that managerial hierarchies constitute an integrating or coordinating device, but 'integrating committees' (p. 12), teams and individual initiatives outside official channels are alternative ways of facilitating collaboration and conflict resolution. The official chain of command is often ineffective for IGOs where initiatives for inter-agency cooperation usually evolve bottom-up and not top down. A classical illustration of this principle is provided by UNEP's involvement in Joint Thematic Programming (JTP) which involves the cooperation of two or more UN organizations. Once these programs are initiated at the professional level, they are moved upwards in the hierarchy to the Committee of Designated Officials on Environmental Matters (DOEM), the principal interagency coordinating mechanism, and ultimately to the above-mentioned administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC).

One of UNEP's basic external constraints which illustrates the importance of the notion of contingency is the fact that member countries often send delegations to UN bodies which are staffed from Ministries with divergent views on environmental matters. If for instance a UNEP member country stresses soil conservation at UNEP's Governing Council, when at the same time another delegation from the same country pushes for maximizing short-term productivity at FAO, it is very difficult for UNEP's secretariat to coordinate joint projects with FAO.

At the same time UNEP's tasks are highly differentiated: soil conservation for example is just one among its numerous ecological concerns. In other words, UNEP is not specialized in any particular area of the environment, and yet it is supposed to facilitate cooperation between organizations whose views are often rather incongruous. In discussing the

topic of the organizational environment, Lorsch and Lawrence (1970:8) put it very succinctly:

Organizations, to be successful, need to meet environmental demands for both differentiation and integration, but they have to do this in spite of the fact that these two states are opposed to each other.

Contingency theory's key concept which helps to reconcile opposing demands within the environment or between environment and the organization is the principle that *there is no best way* to lead organizations and to solve administrative problems. This caution about general recommendations can be illustrated by the generic strategy of maximizing opportunities for task expansion as advocated by Haas (1964) and Cox (1969:213). This strategy would be disastrous for UNEP because its original mandate was much too wide for political reasons. Only very recently, at the 1989 Session, did the Governing Council narrow down UNEP's priorities. In fact, UNEP is sometimes criticized for being involved in too many areas and not being effective in any.

This section has shown how organization theory is pertinent for the analysis of UNEP's constraints and strategy. It provides the framework from which those analytical tools are chosen which are useful in interpreting and guiding organizational decisions in the specific context of UNEP, as well as for IGOs in general. The examples chosen illustrate how some of the key concepts of organization theory are applicable to UNEP's peculiar organizational and political problématique.

#### 1.2.2. Henry Mintzberg's Concepts of Policy and of Structural Configurations

This section attempts to answer some of the most basic organizational questions such as: What is an organizational strategy? What kind of organization are we dealing with here? Which features does it have in common with other organizations? How does it pursue its goals? In order to answer these questions Henry Mintzberg's approach to organization theory has been particularly useful, perhaps because he is an organizational theorist whose writings cover widely different kinds of organizations.

Mintzberg is considered a maverick by many since he has pushed the contingency idea to the point where he largely questions the feasibility of prescriptions about the strategy-making process. His prolific writings, however, have made him difficult to ignore.

### 1.2.2.A The Concept of Organizational Strategy

Mintzberg (1987a) notes that no single definition of strategy is adequate to convey the meaning that the *very complex construct 'strategy'* expresses - that in fact it is helpful to think of it as having different definitions. The reason for this is that the definition needs to be adapted not only to a given situation and organization but also to the approach chosen by the researcher or practitioner. This is why strategy is such a rich and powerful, but at the same time controversial construct. He suggests the five definitions of plan, ploy, pattern, position and perspective.

Most commonly strategy is seen as a *plan*, of which the *ploy* constitutes a subcategory. As we have seen however, Cox and Jacobson (1981:82) have observed that simple operational decisions may take on a strategic dimension as they are accumulated; this is precisely what Mintzberg means by *pattern*. A *position* for Mintzberg is the niche that an organization has staked out in its organizational environment. His last definition is the view of strategy as a shared *perspective*; he explicitly links this approach with Selznick's (1957:38) above-mentioned notion of the 'character' which an organization assumes through the values it embodies. Perhaps most appropriate for UNEP would be the term *vision*.

UNEP's policy can be seen in terms of its coordinating and catalytic position within the UN system, and in terms of its environmental perspective. This strategy is legitimated by the fact that the delegations of all member countries and the officials of all UN organizations theoretically agree on the importance of the environment. UNEP's problem is to channel this fund of goodwill and support into specific projects and programs.

UNEP is sometimes criticized for lacking an overarching policy, for instance Le Prestre (1985:25) considered that it didn't have at that time a "clear political and functional definition of its international role and objectives". It remains to be seen whether the focusing of its priorities at the 1989 Governing Council will result in a stronger profile and more consistency in its activities. In any case, if UNEP's role and objectives are not clear, it is largely the fault of its member states who are supposed to give UNEP policy guidance during their Governing Council meetings. As Mintzberg points out (1987b:28), a strategy provides consistency and stability, it reduces uncertainty. At the same time however, he warns, it must not become a blinder which inhibits peripheral vision, learning and monitoring changes in the environment. This is particularly important for UNEP in today's effervescence in international environmental activities.

The study of the strategy-making process is a vast and separate field. Mintzberg (for instance 1979:443) has enriched it by emphasizing the distinction between strategy formulation and strategy formation. In the first case

there is a dichotomy between formulation and implementation of a strategy: at first a plan is elaborated, usually by top management, and then it is implemented by the lower echelons. In the second case, which represents Mintzberg's view, there is no conscious plan. Rather, the strategy *emerges* or takes form slowly, incrementally, often through trial and error. In fact, the field of organizational policy is divided by a fundamental dispute over the nature of strategy which can be considered either as purposely designed or as emerging. There is no need to go into this discussion in the analysis of an intergovernmental organization, however, since even one of Mintzberg's most outspoken and influential critics acknowledges: "... the 'emerging strategy' model is ... a valid description of the behavior of a majority of not-for-profit organizations" (Ansoff, 1991:461).

In the case of UNEP the strategy can be said to emerge from the interface between government delegations and international civil servants. As Presthus (1973:211) notes for political institutions:

Political appointees need to rely on civil servants to gather the technical complexity of programs and the labyrinthine channels of administrative systems.

The internal dynamic of the strategy-making process of IGOs has not been studied very much so far in a systematic fashion by organizational scientists. It would be of particular interest to investigate patterns of negotiations among the primary actors in various functional areas. A rare and very interesting example of such a study is Elisabeth Riddell-Dixon's (1989) analysis of the Law of the Seas negotiations from a Canadian perspective.

#### 1.2.2.B Structural Configurations

Mintzberg (1979) has developed a typology of five generic organizational models consisting of what he calls the 'simple structure', the 'machine bureaucracy', the 'professional bureaucracy', the 'divisionalized form' and the 'adhocracy' to which he added the 'missionary configuration' as a sixth hybrid possibility. We shall try to see how these archetypes reflect UNEP's basic organizational traits, and we shall find all of them pertinent to varying degrees.

##### *The Simple Structure*

is flexible and highly centralized but lacks elaborate liaison devices and communication channels. It is reflected in UNEP's case by a strong leader who tends to make all the important decisions. He is relying widely on direct supervision and on what Mintzberg (1979:307) calls a 'seat-of-the-pants'

managerial style. He notes (p. 309) that culture seems to figure prominently in the Simple Structure configuration. In view of Dr. Tolba's Egyptian origin and his previous professional experience in his country it is interesting to note that Mintzberg cites a passage by Harbison and Myers (1959:40-41) describing the structure of Abboud Enterprises which is presented by these authors as being typical of the "great majority of Egyptian-owned private establishments":

Here the manager is a dominant individual who extends his personal control over all phases of the business. There is no chartered plan of organization, no formalized procedure for selection and development of managerial personnel, ... authority is associated exclusively with an individual.

#### *The Machine Bureaucracy*

is a large, rigid and centralized hierarchy doing routine work. UNEP of course is quite different from this model but there is a parallel in the presence of formalized communications: communications throughout the UN system and between it and the member governments tend to follow clearly prescribed administrative and diplomatic channels.

#### *The Professional Bureaucracy*

is a decentralized sophisticated and rather rigid organization providing standard products or services requiring a high level of professional competence. This configuration can be observed to some extent in UNEP's scientific monitoring and advising units. This archetype emphasizes the power of expertise and has strong links with external professional institutions. The strategy of these professional units is strongly influenced by academic institutions outside the UN system, e.g. in the increasingly important area of meteorology in the context of climate change. The professionals are relatively autonomous and work in decentralized units such as the International Register of Potentially Toxic Chemicals (IRPTC) in Geneva. Initiatives in these units usually evolve bottom-up. Coordination is achieved through standardization of skills. A particular problem for this archetype which Mintzberg (1979:375) points out is its difficulty in adapting to environmental changes and in innovating because the stable context of professional associations, universities and similar institutions tends to act as a buffer against external disturbances. This observation is not without pertinence for UNEP because, as we shall see through much of the thesis, the field international environmental affairs is undergoing profound institutional changes.

### *The Divisionalized Form*

is comprised of quasi-autonomous entities like UNEP's Industry and Environment Office (IEO) in Paris or the IRPTC facilities in Geneva. UNEP's executive director Dr. Tolba did not favor this structural configuration, he liked to accumulate as much control as possible in his own office. The executive director's inclination may be justified at least partially by the fact that this structure is vulnerable to conflicts over control, or what Mintzberg (1979:402) calls 'power grabs'.

### *The Adhocracy*

(a term Mintzberg explicitly adopted from Alvin Toffler's 'Future Shock') is the most complex structure, yet it is not highly ordered. It is very dynamic, and it is a fertile ground for innovation. It can respond quickly to environmental changes, for instance by grouping experts from different disciplines into ad hoc project teams. UNEP is known for relying heavily on outside consultants for specific tasks which corresponds to the temporary nature of this configuration's organizational components. Coordination in this model of the organization is particularly demanding. It is effected through mutual adjustment, mostly by making use of liaison devices such as the preparatory committees which were set up in order to prepare UNEP's policy document 'The Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond', or the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development. This configuration is also characterized by the numerous presence of what Mintzberg (1979:435) calls functional, integrating and project managers - in fact most of UNEP's professional staff falls into one of these categories. The Adhocracy is not efficient in any quantitative sense due to the large amount of time and energy spent on communication. But since it doesn't produce a standardized output this is of secondary importance. It is most effective where innovation and the solution of complex, ill-structured problems are required, which is certainly the case for many international environmental problems, and it is therefore particularly pertinent for UNEP.

### *The Missionary Configuration*

is mentioned by Mintzberg (1979:479; 1984:210) as a hybrid composed of other structural configurations. It is characterized by a strong belief system and sees its purpose in changing society in some specific ways. Obviously, the sense of having an environmental mission is crucial for UNEP which is considered to be the locus of the UN system's environmental conscience.

To summarize, all five configurations are pertinent for UNEP, which is perhaps not all that surprising given the necessity for it to try to satisfy very incongruous, often conflicting political, diplomatic, scientific and socio-economic needs and demands. Which combination of these idealized structural configurations comes closest in expressing UNEP's organizational character? For those units which are involved in scientific monitoring and the establishment of data bases such as the Global Environmental Monitoring System (GEMS) or the above-mentioned IRPTC clearly the model of the professional bureaucracy with its extensive links to academic institutions is most prevalent. Everywhere else the simple structure and the adhocracy are most pertinent. These two models, however, are conflicting with each other: the first one is centralized and achieves coordination through direct supervision, whereas the other one is driven by the power of the experts and not by traditional lines of authority; its coordination is effected through mutual adjustment. In view of UNEP's very complex and dynamic tasks and organizational environment on one hand, and its highly centralized configuration on the other hand, the tentative lesson one may draw from Mintzberg's models is that it should become more of an adhocracy and less of a simple structure! As we shall see in further discussions, this is indeed a major conclusion of the thesis.

This section has demonstrated how organization theory can be used to diagnose organizational problems and to sketch out the parameters of a solution. It should be stressed, however, as the title of an article by Waterman, Peters and Phillips' (1980) suggests, "Structure is Not Organization", i.e. a structural decentralization will hardly be effective unless it is accompanied by more fundamental strategic changes. To conclude this chapter on organization theory, one can certainly say that UNEP as a research subject in interorganizational relations is particularly fascinating due to its coordinating mandate, and its setting in a huge, very dynamic and highly politicized organizational network. It is clearly a very unusual organization, no other UN body has such an extensive and high-profile coordinating mandate, and no international environmental organization outside the UN has UNEP's scope and reach.

### 1.3. The Theory of Interorganizational Relations (IOR)

The above two sections have provided the setting for the analysis of UNEP's most characteristic organizational traits, namely its dynamic relationship with other UN bodies, with member governments and with NGOs. It is important to remember, however, that it is only natural for a catalyzing and coordinating organization like UNEP that its *role in the network*, rather than its internal characteristics, constitute the prime analytical preoccupation. This role is the subject of IOR theory.

### 1.3.1. New Forms of Organizations

What is an organization? Bozeman (1987:6) has distilled a number of well-known opinions and perspectives into the following definition: "Organizations are formally structured and social collectives established to attain goals by acquiring resources from the environment and directing those resources to activities perceived as relevant to the goals". Since organizations are becoming increasingly preeminent in our society, they are also becoming more and more public. The management of publicness increases the importance of IOR since publicness leads to more interdependence (Bozeman, 1987:149). This societal trend requires increasingly public relations and communications skills for people in leadership positions, and in general the capacity to deal with complexity.

This increased complexity of today's organizational life in general has recently led to new organizational forms. These were predicted and described by futurologist Alvin Toffler (1970:120; 1980:326; 1990:293); he foresaw correctly a move towards more flexible, varied, adaptable, matrix-like organizations which he called *adhocracies*. Organizational theorists like Miles and Snow (1986:73) support this view; they observe a new organizational form emerging which they call a *dynamic network*. It is characterized by

a particularly heavy reliance on self-managed work groups and a greater willingness to view organizational boundaries and memberships as highly flexible.

Drucker (1988:47), too, sees a trend toward fewer levels of hierarchy, with knowledge-workers and specialists getting along without much supervision.

Essentially, all these new forms of organizations represent *networks* which place a great deal of importance on delegation and autonomy. These trends do concern UNEP because changing organizational boundaries and memberships invariably characterize any organization with a catalyzing and coordinating mandate. Unfortunately, as mentioned above, UNEP has a centralized leadership style which makes the application of these principles rather difficult.

### 1.3.2. A Review of the IOR Literature

As organizations are increasingly forced to deal with other organizations as part of their daily activities, the relationships between organizations are getting more and more attention by organization theorists; they have been defined as follows: "Interorganizational relationships are the relatively

enduring transactions, flows, and linkages that occur among or between an organization and one or more organizations in its environment" (Oliver, 1990:241). Aldrich and Pfeffer (1976:79) state: "we consider the subject of interorganizational relations to be a special case of the more general study of organizations and their environment". Perrow (1979:464) goes a step further. He observes that the environment of organizations is more than ever composed of other organizations. It can easily be shown that societal preoccupations, for instance environmental concerns, are now channelled through various associations, federations and corporations - in short through all kinds of large and small organizations - to a larger degree than let's say forty years ago. Undoubtedly, we are living in the age of organizations. To cite Perrow again (1979:468):

Organizations constitute the body of society, and are rapidly reaching the point of making up all of society.

The literature on IOR has grown tremendously since the mid-1970s but it remains "highly fragmented" (Oliver, 1990:241). It is presumably the fact that IOR discussions are becoming more and more pervasive which she had in mind with her comment: "We no longer know what we know about the formation of interorganizational relationships" (p. 241). She uses the acronym IOR when talking about interorganizational relations in the traditional, somewhat general sense, and IORs for specific kinds of interorganizational relationships such as joint programs.

In order to study a coordinating unit of a large network such as the UN system which is composed of a large number of interconnected organizations it is logical to define as unit of observation and analysis the organization in its environment (Evans, 1976:119), or the structure of interorganizational relations (Mizruchi and Schwarz, 1987:3). Until around 1970, social scientists tended to focus on norms, values and collectivities, as well as on patterns within organizations rather than between organizations (Levine and White, 1969). Evans finds this neglect of IOR surprising but explainable by the greater complexity of IOR compared to individual organizations.

Pfeffer and Salancik's book *The External Control of Organizations* (1978) which describes what they call a *Resource Dependence* perspective has been particularly influential on those researchers who are interested in exploring the organization/environment interface. They emphasize the influence of the environment on the organization's decision-making process at the expense of its autonomy (p. 257).

A similar approach is taken by a school of thought in organization theory called *Population Ecology*. It stresses the interconnections and interdependence among organizations, and makes use of biological analogies to explain organizational features and processes. Some of the terms

used this way are species interdependence, growth, cycles, competition, predation, niches etc. For instance, Hodge and Anthony (1984:159) discuss 'the organization's ecology' and describe the stages in the organizational life cycle in the same terms as a zoologist would: birth, growth, maturity, deterioration and death.

Levine and White (1969:121) use the concept of *organizational exchange* in this context which they define as "any voluntary activity between two organizations which has consequences, actual or anticipated, for the realization of their respective goals or objectives". The focus on exchange relations leads to the perception of the interorganizational field (Warren, 1967; Beard and Dess, 1988) as a network which is largely shaped by the amount of power an organization has over the resource flow in the particular network (Cook, 1977:68).

These exchanges can take three different forms: unilateral, e.g. if UNEP finances a publication done by FAO; joint, e.g. if UNEP cooperates with UNESCO in order to organize a conference on environmental education; reciprocal, e.g. if UNEP cooperates with UNDP on desertification on a 'quid-pro-quo' relationship, i.e. only to the extent that UNDP carries a specified share of the project costs.

The environmental school is opposed by a theoretical approach which emphasizes the strategic choice decisionmakers may exert in spite of contextual constraints; it has been authoritatively formulated by Child's (1972) classical treatise. His view is essentially a sociological perspective based on the implications of structural design, and a recognition of political processes within the organization. This perspective ties in with the previously mentioned notion of the '*enacted environment*' (Weick, 1969): the environment is seen here as manipulated by the resourceful and proactive organization.

As mentioned in the previous discussion of the enactment process, UNEP is much less able to influence its environment than for instance the World Bank. Nevertheless, an example of an enacted environment in UNEP's case would be the fact that nearly all decisions by the delegations of the Governing Council member-states are taken by consensus; this indicates that the UNEP secretariat does not simply wait for governments to cast their vote but that it negotiates and lobbies intensively before the decision is taken. UNEP does not just react passively to its organizational environment, to the extent possible it acts proactively.

The opening up of the organizational boundaries in the 1960s by researchers who are now considered classics led to a widening of the research focus. The 1970s brought the interplay between strategic choice and external constraints into the foreground. At the same time, a very quantitative kind of 'network analysis' was very fashionable in the late 1970s, but this methodology has yielded rather disappointing results (Mintzberg, 1978; Alba, 1982:68; Lincoln, 1982:32).

As soon as organizations were considered to be 'open' adaptive systems, their relations with other organizations received increasing attention. The 1970s consequently saw the emergence of IOR as a new subdiscipline (Hall, 1987:233). Epistemologically speaking, IOR is a wing of organization theory which is located in the overlap of Organizational Sociology and Organizational Policy. Most early studies in fact were done by sociologists.

The 1980s saw a further expansion of organizational analysis by researchers who tried to link inter- and intraorganizational phenomena. Mizruchi and Schwarz (1987:7) have expressed the foundation of this school of thought which they call 'Structural Analysis' (not to be confounded with structuralism) as follows:

... there is one fundamental principle which unites all of those working within this perspective: the belief that social processes can best be explained by examinations of the concrete *interpersonal and organizational relations in which actors are embedded*, rather than by concepts such as norms and values or aggregations of responses to survey items based on individual attributes.

Warren (1967:404), a sociologist, presented one of the first *typologies of organizational contexts* for inter-organizational decision-making. Due to UNEP's complex character all his four types (unitary, federative, coalitional and social choice) can be found to some extent in and around UNEP: the unitary context is reflected in UNEP's semi-autonomous units such as the EIO (Environment and Industry Office), the federative context in the whole UN system, the coalitional context prevails in the numerous instances of joint programs, and finally, an example for the social choice context whereby other organizations which don't necessarily share common goals but find it advisable - at least for public relations purposes - to give the impression of common basic values might be seen in UNIDO's concern for the environment.

Clark (1965) distinguishes between bureaucratic and interorganizational patterns: authority, work standards and accountability are formalized and apply to the former organizational sphere, whereas the latter are characterized as being more fluid, flexible and loose. The management style of UNEP's former executive director Dr. Tolba has been described in interviews with UNEP staff members as dynamic, unbureaucratic and flexible, i.e. in this respect it fits well with Clark's requirements for interorganizational interaction.

Organizations often need a mechanism for linking up with other organizations; usually interorganizational groups or committees are created

for this purpose. Their mandates include tasks such as coordination, planning, policy formulation, and resource allocation. An example is the already mentioned Administrative Coordinating Committee (ACC) which unites the heads of the agencies and other UN organs or their deputies under the chairmanship of the Secretary General. It is the United Nation system's top interorganizational coordinating committee. Schopler (1987:704) developed a typology of these mechanisms which categorizes them in a matrix along two axes: mandated or voluntary origin of the committees versus high or low external task structure.

Typically, such interorganizational coordination mechanisms tend to be voluntary in the UN system, and the external task structure is nearly always very low. The reason for this, as Holly (1985) has explained in the case of UNESCO is that government delegations don't usually get much involved in administrative issues because they would have to work through majority resolutions which require a great deal of diplomatic effort; this gives the secretariats a great deal of leeway in developing the tasks for these committees.

Schopler (1987) observed that this category of groups (i.e. voluntary participation and a low degree of task structure) tends to show a high degree of membership satisfaction. Unfortunately, since agency heads tend to excel in presenting a diplomatic impression of smooth cooperation it is virtually impossible to make any inferences about membership satisfaction here. However, in the case of DOEM it is well known that contrary to Schopler's hypothesis, tensions among the participating delegates of UN bodies are common!

The quality of work according to Schopler is also expected to be high in this category of groups - again this is rather difficult to ascertain. Finally, Schopler expects compliance with external demands to be low. This proposition, however, is too simplistic in the highly politicized UN context - the same observation is certainly pertinent in many other environments as well. External demands tend to be intrinsically varied and often contradictory which means that compliance with external demands, especially at the UN, is either partisan (for instance in favour of the industrialized countries) or a compromise.

As can be seen, more research is required in order to reach valid hypotheses regarding *coordinating mechanisms*. In fact, the complexity of organizational interfaces led O'Toole and Montjoy (1984:491) to conclude that "... there is, as yet, no general agreement on a predictive theory of implementation (of interorganizational policy), or even on what variables are most important to consider." Hall (1987:255) notes that coordination is a process, not an outcome, which is distinguished from cooperation by the fact that participating organizations adjust to each other deliberately through a concerted decision-making process. Cooperating organizations, by contrast,

maintain their own goals and their autonomy, even as they work toward a common goal.

An important role of interorganizational groups and individuals in charge of interorganizational relations is called *boundary spanning* (Miles 1980:316). Boundary spanners scan and monitor the environment and interpret the information they gather for their organization. Sometimes they also act as protective input filters, so-called *gate keepers*, for instance to protect the organization from information overflow by categorizing and synthesizing data. Boundary spanners need to be very flexible, diplomatic and well informed about the organization as well as about its environment.

UNEP is sometimes faced with the break-down of the boundary function in some member countries' Ministries when it sends out technical material destined for professionals in a certain field whom it is not allowed or not able for technical reasons to contact directly. It has to go through 'official channels' such as Ministries or Embassies, and it happens sometimes that the literature winds up decorating the bookshelf of an official who is not at all involved in the area, whereas the professionals who need it don't get it.

Boundary spanning is a crucial component of coordination. In the UN, coordination is largely based on the '*focal point*' system: when professionals or administrators want to communicate with someone in another UN organization they will usually channel their messages through an individual who is responsible, say, to act as the focal point for communications with the World Bank at UNESCO. In theory this system provides for efficient coordination of interorganizational communications. In practice, however, interviews have shown that the weakness of the system lies in its crucial dependence on the skills of the focal point.

A case of failed boundary spanning imputable largely to the focal point came to light at one of UNEP's most important cooperating UN agencies when interviews revealed that a very senior official in charge of project financing had never been contacted by UNEP. It turned out that the person specifically mandated to *liaise* with UNEP (this is UN jargon for boundary spanning) bypassed this project official and channelled all communications directly to the technical staff at the operational level. Is this only the fault of the focal point at the agency? It would seem that in view of the number and magnitude of the projects involved, UNEP's own boundary spanning activity leaves a lot to be desired, especially since its top officials visit the agency regularly and obviously never made the effort to meet this important official in question.

Since UNEP has the mandate of coordinating and catalyzing environmental activities throughout the giant network constituted by the UN system it qualifies for the term of a *linking-pin* (Joensson, 1986:46) organization:

Linking-pin organizations that have extensive and overlapping ties to different parts of a network play the key role in integrating a population of organizations. Having ties to more than one action-set or subsystem, linking-pin organizations are the nodes through which a network is loosely joined (Aldrich and Whetten, 1981:390).

In conclusion, whatever this still quite new field is called, IOR, network analysis, structural analysis, joint ventures, joint programming, strategic alliance, organizational combinations or hybrids (Borys and Jemison, 1989) - this is clearly a new and exiting research area with great potential for expansion, innovation and insight. With its emphasis on the organizational environment as well as on the strategy of individual organizations, IOR can be seen as a way to reconcile external constraints and organizational autonomy in organization theory.

### 1.3.3. IOR and Joint Programming

In spite of the lack of a generally accepted framework of IOR, a conclusion can be drawn with regards to the spanning of organizational boundaries through personal relations, especially in professional and technical specialties. These relations are the subject of Granovetter's (1972:1373) article with the self-explanatory title 'The Strength of Weak Ties'. He found that the network of work-related acquaintances plays a very important role in shaping the professional environment: "weak ties play a role in effecting social cohesion". He argues that the exchange of information and ideas is facilitated by these interpersonal networks and that communication with these acquaintances at meetings and conventions leads to the formation of a sense of community.

Even more forceful are Luthans' (1988) findings. In a major study of nearly 500 managers of both large and small organizations through questionnaires, interviews and observation, his conclusion is unambiguous: skillful networking is the most crucial activity in the determination of a manager's career. He distinguished between effective and successful managers and found that the effective managers (effective in terms of fulfilling their task) excelled in the traditional managerial activities such as planning, organizing, coordinating, controlling, communicating and motivating. The most successful ones, however, put much more emphasis on networking, i.e. socializing, politicking and interacting with outsiders. Luthans ends by suggesting that it is the effective managers who should be promoted and not the ones with social and political skills.

This may be a pertinent suggestion for most organizations. In the very particular case of the UN, however, where the fiercely independent agencies, and often disagreeing delegates from different Ministries of the same

government make coordination a constant uphill battle, and where few people properly understand the negotiating processes going on in a myriad of committees, councils and working groups, Luthans' suggestion should be adjusted to these organizational and political realities. At the UN, diplomatic skills, which are largely synonymous with networking capabilities, are perhaps more important than managerial efficiency. Perhaps more than anywhere, this is true in the case of UNEP with its emphasis on coordinating and catalyzing. It is no coincidence that people like Maurice Strong, UNEP's first executive director, or his successor Dr. Tolba, who have these skills, have been so successful in this highly dynamic organizational environment. In fact, Dr. Tolba, in spite of his oft-criticized managerial style is usually credited for having navigated, on the whole, with great skills on the rough seas of international diplomacy.

The point here is that the more an organization's context is complex and politicized, the more diplomatic and networking skills are valuable. In his essay on leadership in international organizations, Cox (1969:213) stresses the need for the executive head of IGOs to be able to form coalitions and alliances which will usually be more or less implicit, that is they are often not institutionalized, and they may be formed on an ad hoc basis. This is not an easy task in the UN context since international organizations essentially work by separating issues; furthermore, different majorities may be formed on different issues. One can easily go a step further and emphasize the need for a high level of communication skills at all levels, not just for the executive head. In fact, a senior UN official in an interview has very much stressed the crucial importance of unofficial contacts outside established channels among people working for common objectives!

Caldwell (1990:80) provides following definition of joint programming:

*joint programming* is the process of mutual identification by two or more bodies of program concepts, objectives, and activities which are relevant to the aims of those bodies. Through exchange of information and consultation at the time of program formulation, joint programming establishes those areas and issues which are of mutual interest and thereby provides a basis for a shared program of work.

One of the complexities involved in joint programming lies in the fact that the needs of the system, e.g. the UN system, often conflict with the personal preferences of the decision-makers (Crozier and Friedberg 1977:87). This conflict may be aggravated by the interdependence resulting from joint activities among two or more participating organizations (Aiken and Hage, 1968). The degree of interdependence of course depends on the relative

importance of the project compared to the size of the organization, and on the strategic priority of the project in the organization's long-term plan.

Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) have pointed out the dilemma faced by cooperating organizations. On one hand they try to maintain flexibility in order to adjust to possible internal and external changes in the future. On the other hand they seek to achieve a certain degree of stability and certainty by establishing interorganizational structures which limit their independence (p.261):

The price for inclusion in any collective structure is a the loss of discretion and control over one's activities. Ironically, to gain some control over the activities of another organization, the focal organization must surrender some of its own autonomy.

Some organizations are more willing than others to sacrifice part of their autonomy. The World Bank, for example, is highly reluctant to compromise its independence in order to facilitate cooperation in the field of development assistance with other UN bodies (Crane and Finkle, 1981:518; Le Prestre, 1982:297). Interviews at the Bank have confirmed that in spite of vigorous lip service to the protection of the environment, the World Bank until recently has shown little interest in joint programs with UNEP. It tends to prefer to do things its own way and on its own terms, rather than in conjunction with UNEP. Its financial clout of course allows it, in this domain as in others, to defend its independence against some of the constraints of joint programming.

The implementation of joint programs often necessitates a certain predictability which leads to the development of stable interorganizational structures and to a coordination of organizational strategies. Oliver (1990:256) points out that the interdependence resulting from joint activities tends to have a stabilizing influence on the participants. The result may be a certain degree of bureaucratization since, as Crozier (1963:128) points out, it is easier to manage things than people. UNEP is certainly not exempt from the danger of exaggerated bureaucratization. Interviews have shown that in many cases specialized agencies have been frustrated by red tape in joint programs - sometimes to the point where they preferred not to bother to work with UNEP because of these requirements, especially in the case of relatively small projects which often demand as much formal bureaucratic effort and time as larger ones.

UNEP's exceptionally large number of joint programs reflects its high degree of complexity. Aiken and Hage (1968:915) found that the number of joint programs varies directly with the degree of complexity. They also noted that organizations involved in many joint programs tend to be decentralized

(p. 915) which gives empirical support for the argument detailed later in this thesis favoring a partial decentralization of UNEP.

This chapter has demonstrated the usefulness of the domain concept in an evaluative analysis of UNEP. This concept provides a link between organization theory and evaluation research and allows to focus the investigation on institutional aspects of intergovernmental organizations. In the case of UNEP a complementary perspective could be brought into the analytical framework by Regime Theory which focuses on international agreements. This theory is of great interest to international environmental affairs but its inclusion here would go beyond the scope of this thesis.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE CREATION OF UNEP

This chapter provides a brief history of UNEP. It shows how it emerged as a fledgling organization burdened with largely unrealistic expectations from the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm and how it gained legitimacy and respect as a new UN institution by adapting its task to its resources and its organizational environment.

#### 2.1. Earlier International Environmental Initiatives

The first UN conference on the environment was the UN Scientific Conference on the Conservation and Utilization of Resources (UNSCCOUR) which took place in March 1949 in Lake Success near New York City. It evoked "the importance of the world's natural resources ... [and] the need for continuous development and widespread application of the techniques of resource conservation and utilization " (Boardman, 1981:39). The most important long-term contributions of this early conference were lists of threatened species.

The study of the earliest international environmental organizations presents an interesting case of organizational Darwinism. After WWII the Swiss League for the Protection of Nature, founded in 1909 as a fundraising body to pay for the establishment of a Swiss national park, was very active in international environmental affairs. Under the presidency of Dr. Charles Bernard, the Swiss League's lead in the field of international wildlife protection was so much resented by other nations, especially the British, that "murmurings about Swiss imperialism" (Boardman, 1981:37) were uttered in this context...

In the late 1940s, international environmental affairs were still in an ill-defined, embryonic state which permitted initiatives such as the Swiss League's. It found a 'rival' in the person of UNESCO's first Director-General,

Sir Julian Huxley, a distinguished British biologist who tried to bring the conservation of nature into UNESCO's purview. Much earlier than most of his contemporaries at the UN, he foresaw the importance of international environmental protection. After lobbying the member states vigorously, he obtained the backing of UNESCO's General Conference in 1947 in support of his view.

The Swiss League, however, aimed at creating a new and separate organization for this purpose. After a few preparatory international meetings, it set up a provisional 'International Union for the Protection of Nature' (IUPN) at a meeting in Brunnen, Switzerland, in 1948, and it was appointed to act as its agent. Through its success in channelling environmental initiatives into a new organization, the Swiss League temporarily thwarted UNESCO's environmental ambitions.

IUPN's membership was an interesting hybrid consisting of governments, agencies of governments, international inter- and nongovernmental organizations and national nongovernmental organizations. UNESCO seems to have accepted this turn of events gracefully since it gave IUPN the financial support it needed for the scientific and technical preparations of the 1949 Lake Success Conference (Broadman, 1981:43).

The IUPN changed its name in 1956 into the 'International Union for the Conservation of Nature' (IUCN). It is still very much involved in the protection of endangered species as well as in numerous other environmental and sustainable development activities. It has perhaps the longest history among the major international environmental organizations. Two other early entrants in this nascent field were the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), (now linked with IUCN), which was created in London in 1961, and UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) program, established in 1970.

Looking at the Swiss League's initiative in retrospect, it is regrettable that UNESCO waited 20 years until it succeeded, through its MAB program, in becoming involved in the protection of the environment in a major way. On the other hand, the creation of IUCN as a unique international organization arguably more than compensated for this delay.

The creation of IUPN-IUCN may have been a necessary first step in the long process which led to UNEP's creation. At that time the concept of a UNEP-like organization was already widely discussed, but there was not yet sufficient political support. That is why the formula of a mixed governmental and non-governmental international organization with voluntary membership and contributions was accepted as the best global environmental institution achievable under the political conditions of the late 1940s. Its attractiveness lay in the fact that no government had to fear any loss of control of its sovereignty, while at the same time a first modest step was made to institutionalize international environmental affairs.

## 2.2. The Preparations of the 'Stockholm 1972' Conference

The United Nations held 'The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment' (UNCHE) in Stockholm from June 5-16, 1972. The main result of this conference was the creation of UNEP. It turned out to have a great impact on international environmental affairs, not only because a new UN program was initiated, but also because for the first time the environment was put, at least for ten days, at the center stage of international diplomacy. Ever since, the term 'Stockholm conference' refers to this watershed where international politics and environmental consciousness were joined together and institutionalized.

An understanding of the importance of this conference requires an investigation of its lengthy preparations. Throughout the 1960s, environmental activities carried out by the UN's specialized agencies and other UN organs took on a rapidly increasing importance, and as a consequence the perception grew that some sort of environmental coordination and planning for the whole UN system should be set up. This perception was strongest among representatives of the industrialized countries where the environmental ravages resulting from intensive industrialization were particularly evident. In response to this widespread degradation of natural resources, environmental consciousness was relatively well developed.

Sweden took the initiative which led to the Stockholm conference. On December 13, 1967, the Swedish delegation to the plenary session of the UN General Assembly introduced a motion to study the possibility of holding an international conference on problems of the human environment. This was followed, on May 20, 1968, by an official letter from the permanent representative of Sweden to the UN Secretary-General. This follow-up by an official letter is an interesting detail: it shows the difference between a simple rhetorical exercise, which is all too often the only official government reaction in the face of a complex problem, and a serious intention to do something concrete. On July 30, 1968, ECOSOC adopted Resolution 1346 (XLV), which recommended that the General Assembly convene such a conference at its twenty-third Session. The final step in the process which finalized the UN's decision was taken on December 3, 1968, when the General Assembly decided by consensus to adopt Draft Resolution 2398 (XXIII) which set in motion the preparatory efforts for the conference (Caldwell, 1990:49).

The next important step on the road to Stockholm was the setting up of a 27-nation Preparatory Committee (PREPCOM) which was, again upon ECOSOC's recommendation, established through General Assembly Resolution 2581 (XXIV) on December 15, 1969. Because the committee was too large to actually organize an international conference, a special staff was appointed under the direction of Maurice Strong, an official of the government

of Canada, who was also named secretary-general of the conference. He directed the preparations "with a thoroughness unknown in previous international conferences" (Caldwell, 1984:45). The four years preceding the conference saw a large number of events in many countries which were aimed at achieving a coherent position for the delegates. In Canada for instance, a Canadian Preparatory Committee for the conference held public consultations in eleven cities between April and May of 1972. At the international level, intensive and wide-ranging exchanges took place among scientists, citizen groups and government officials. These activities not only provided the foundation for the conference, but also raised environmental consciousness in international public opinion.

The Prepcom held four regular meetings between 1970 and 1972, and a special conference in Founex, Switzerland in June 1971. Input was provided by intergovernmental working groups on marine pollution, soils, conservation, monitoring and surveillance, and on a draft Declaration on the Human Environment. Numerous other meetings, seminars and conferences were simultaneously attempting to influence the conference preparations. Several intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations got involved, especially IUCN and the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) (Caldwell, 1984:46).

Of all the preparatory events the Founex conference was politically the most influential. It consisted of a panel of experts in economics, development planning, banking, social research and ecology. *The 'Founex Report'* has had a lasting impact on international environmental affairs; it "helped to alleviate some of the Third World misgivings concerning their developmental aspirations" (Caldwell, 1990:52)<sup>7</sup>. It was at this conference that the conflicting views of the industrialized and the developing countries regarding environmental matters were negotiated into a common agenda although it was loose and overloaded to accommodate all parties.

The industrialized countries originally wanted to limit discussions to pollution issues, whereas the developing countries tended to consider environmental protection measures as an impediment to their development. They argued that their low degree of industrialization created relatively minor pollution problems, and that the few industries they were building up were desperately needed for their development, especially in view of the very high unemployment in the cities. The main point of the Third World countries was that environmental issues could not be separated from social and economic development issues such as poverty, human settlements, health, education and information. In other words, for the Third World, environmental policies cannot deal with pollution problems in isolation, they can only be considered within the framework of comprehensive development policies.

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<sup>7</sup> The Founex Report is reproduced in *International Conciliation* 586 (January 1972).

The outcome of the Founex conference was a victory for the developing countries. The panel concluded in its report that "the kind of environmental problems that are of importance in developing countries are those that can be overcome by the process of development itself" (Caldwell, 1984:46). The developing countries had essentially succeeded at the Founex meeting in persuading the industrialized countries to acknowledge, at least at the rhetorical level, that the protection of their environment has to go hand in hand with industrialization, technology transfer and official development assistance. The debate between environment and development is still going on - in fact with much renewed vigor in the light of the debt crisis which has hit the Third World in the meantime. It should be noted however, that this relationship was seriously discussed only with regards to the Third World. Discussions of this same relationship as it applies to the industrialized countries are a different matter, and as we shall see, UNEP is only now starting to tackle this other 'nexus of concerns' as Haas, Williams and Babai (1977:223) call it.

### 2.3. The 1972 Stockholm Conference

The Stockholm conference - a term which has become much more popular than the term United Nations Conference for the Human Environment - was attended by 1200 delegates from 113 nations, as well as by representatives of 400 NGOs active in international environmental affairs (Kilian, 1987). The Soviet Union and its East European allies boycotted the conference because the German Democratic Republic was not accepted as a participant. This diplomatic imbroglio may have acted as a catalyst in making both the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany new members of the United Nations the following year. It should be noted that the official conference staff included a number of Soviet citizens.

In spite of the preliminary and tentative agreements which were achieved at the Founex conference and the many other preparatory meetings, the conference was immediately divided between the First and the Third World, and Caldwell (1984:51) largely credits the diplomatic skills of the conference's secretary-general, Maurice Strong, for overcoming this very fundamental ideological division.

For instance, Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India, called poverty the greatest polluter and declared that "many of the advanced countries of today have reached their present affluence by their domination over other races and countries, the exploitation of their own masses and own natural resources. They got a head start through sheer ruthlessness, undisturbed by feelings of compassion, or by abstract theories of freedom, equality, or justice" (Caldwell, 1984:50).

Fortunately, the developing countries realized that compromise was required in the interest of the global environment, and they had the good sense to moderate their demands. They realized that one new organization could never do justice to the complexities of North-South relations. Furthermore, they shared the rich countries' misgivings over a new supranational authority which might affect their national economic strategies. The industrialized countries, on the other hand, essentially accepted the Third World's position, even though this was largely a rhetorical and tactical reaction.

Many of the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) met separately and elaborated a report under the guidance of the anthropologist Margaret Mead. The report was very idealistic. It was not limited to environmental issues but went well beyond these to focus on social justice and redistribution. Like many declarations and prescriptions which were enunciated in the 1970s, however, it had little to offer in terms of a realistic assessment of obstacles to be expected, and in terms of implementation of these principles. United Nations conferences tend to suffer from the same flaw, i.e. their output tends to be highly rhetorical, and the resolutions tend to be ambiguous compromises among conflicting objectives and perceptions. But this conference was exceptional because it focused the international community's political will on the practical task of creating a new UN organization.

It was perhaps Maurice Strong's greatest accomplishment that, under his leadership, the conference managed to bridge the North-South gap with *the Stockholm Action Plan*. UNEP's formation at Stockholm<sup>8</sup> as a culmination of four years of intense international negotiation gave international environmental concerns a considerable degree of universality, legitimacy and an unprecedented acceptability in the Third World.

#### 2.4. The Emergence of UNEP as an Institution

The 113 national delegations represented at Stockholm faced so many obstacles that they really did not have time to prioritize UNEP's tasks. As a consequence, they arrived at a vast catalogue of recommended actions. In a compromise which reconciled the First World's emphasis on pollution control and the Third World's focus on socio-economic development issues, an Action Plan containing 109 recommendations (many of them subdivided into several parts) was approved. As far as the organizational integration of the new programme into the United Nations structure was concerned, three

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<sup>8</sup>. As is the norm for UN conferences, UNCHE's resolutions had to be confirmed by the following UN General Assembly.

different models of a future UNEP were considered by the conference delegates (Kilian, 1987:242):

a) Decentralized "laissez-faire"

This model was proposed by delegates who were particularly wary of letting any UN organ intrude onto their national sovereignty. Proponents of this model considered the already established UN specialized agencies such as FAO, UNESCO, WMO and IMCO able to handle the environmental matters in their purview by simply adding some sort of an ecology division. This view gained additional support from past experience which showed that the specialized agencies were autonomous to such a high degree that coordination is always difficult for the UN secretariat.

b) A powerful supranational authority

The opposite model found support among the most environmentally concerned delegates who felt that threats to the global ecological balance could only be averted by strong internationally coordinated actions. This model didn't have a chance, since it is incompatible with the full respect of national sovereignty on which the whole UN system is build.

c) A new type of UN Council

Proposed by the United States, this model suggested the creation of a new 'Environment Council'. It would coordinate the environmental activities of the specialized agencies and report to ECOSOC as one of its commissions. The main problem was that it would require a change in the UN charter. While some delegates were in favour of using this change as an opportunity for a revision of the UN Charter, the general feeling was that no matter how much merit such a revision might have, the uncertainty and unpredictable delays and negotiations might jeopardize the very creation of UNEP.

d) The final organizational outcome

The delegates of the Stockholm Conference finally decided to create a Governing Council with limited membership, to be elected yearly by the General Assembly, which would have the mandate to coordinate environmental matters among the other UN organs. By opting for a new organization, the UN conference followed a well established pattern: new tasks given to the United Nations by its member countries historically tend to be executed by new organizations rather than by extending the range of activities of existing organizations (Kilian, 1987:245). The purpose of this practice is presumably to avoid jealousies among sister organizations. Indeed, an option which received some consideration was simply to add environmental responsibilities to UNDP's mission. In the end however, the notion that the urgency of environmental problems necessitated a separate

organization prevailed over the perhaps easier solution of extending UNDP's span of activities.

Thus the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) became UNEP's organizational model. The difference is not only that UNDP is much larger, but also the fact that UNEP was given essentially a global perspective whereas UNDP finances local projects in cooperation with the member-countries and other UN organs. Like UNDP, UNEP reports to the General Assembly via ECOSOC. On December 15, 1972, the formal creation of UNEP was finalized in the General Assembly by Resolution 2997 (XXVII). This means that UNEP's origins are not rooted in a treaty of its member-states but in a resolution of the General Assembly. The same process initiated the establishment of other UN organs such as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The North-South polarization of the General Assembly inevitably resulted in a highly politicized context for the creation of UNEP. This polarization continues to shape UNEP's decision-making process and its very nature.

The term 'programme' in UN jargon indicates the basic organizational philosophy which the General Assembly sought to give the new unit. It did not want to create a new specialized agency, one reason being that it wanted to minimize overlaps and potential conflicts with environmental activities in the existing Agencies. Furthermore, as a programme reporting to the General Assembly, UNEP was given a high-profile status with a strong leadership and advocacy role with regards to environmental concerns throughout the UN system. Furthermore, the General Assembly did not want to create another large bureaucracy but wanted to keep the new organization relatively small. Also, one might speculate that ideological differences were relatively easy to ignore with regard to the creation of a small organization for which it wasn't really worth while to put up a big fight.

The General Assembly's leitmotif in the process of establishing UNEP was the notion that the interdisciplinary and complex nature of environmental problems required a separate organism which could guide, coordinate and catalyze the environmental activities of the whole UN system. In fact, the concepts of coordination and catalyzing were from the very beginning the cornerstone of UNEP's *raison d'être*. Furthermore, the compilation of scientific data for the purpose of making informed decisions and the creation of environmental awareness were further priority areas for UNEP.

UNEP was, however, also expected to execute certain projects, but only when they were outside the purview of the specialized agencies. The emphasis at the General Assembly was put on UN-wide planning, on creating an environmental vision. UNEP's nature was seen as dynamic, flexible, and able to address complex political and scientific problems.

The agenda given to the new Programme's Governing Council was far too ambitious for its relatively modest resources:

- it should govern the general environmental policies of the UN system, and their coordination among the various UN organs;
- it should, with the help of the major scientific institutions, monitor and report on the condition of the global environment;
- it should ensure that international environmental programmes are reconciled with the development priorities of the Third World countries;
- it should supervise the management of the Environment Fund.

In view of the heavy schedule of the Stockholm conference, the sensitive question of the future site of UNEP's secretariat was left for the General Assembly to decide. It had to choose among several candidate cities from the North and the South, including New York, and Geneva which was considered to be the most likely candidate. It finally chose Nairobi in Resolution 3004 (XXVII), with 93 states in favor, 30 abstentions (mostly industrialized countries), and one vote (the US) opposing the site. The Nairobi proposal was supported mainly by the African countries (which number about fifty), as well as by most of the other developing countries.

The developing country support for the Nairobi location was less motivated by any specific environmental concerns than by understandable resentments over the fact that so far not a single major UN facility was located in a Third World country. This UN gesture towards the South was of course long overdue.

The secretariat was to be headed by an executive director who was also given the rank of an under-secretary-general of the United Nations in order to emphasize UNEP's high profile within the UN system. He or she would be proposed by the Secretary-General and then elected, not by the Governing Council but by the General Assembly, for a four-year term. This procedure demonstrates the central position within the UN system that UNEP was given by its creators. Not surprisingly, Maurice Strong was elected as UNEP's first executive director.

Once the new Environment Programme had been set up and provided with a resource objective (US\$ 100 million over five years), it had to be given an operational framework in order to enable it to execute its mandate. This framework consists largely of so-called Programme Activity Centers (PACs) which serve as foci for networks of cooperation with IGOs and NGOs, and vary in size, structure, and duration according to the ongoing activities (Caldwell, 1990:78). Furthermore, in order to concentrate attention throughout the UN system and beyond it on environmental priority areas UNEP publishes an annual report called *The State of the World Environment*.

The first three sessions of the Governing Council (1973-1975) were crucial. They turned out to be truly formative for the new fledgling and set UNEP on a course which largely determined its operation and its policies for many years. Development-related issues received great consideration at the Council's deliberations. In particular, at the First Session in 1973 which took place in Geneva the concept of "additionality" was stressed: UNEP was to call on the industrialized countries, in collaboration with the appropriate UN agencies, to make additional official development assistance available to developing countries in order to enable them to pay the increased costs of environmentally sound technologies. The South was fearing, not without reasons, that existing funds for official development assistance would be diverted to environmental programs. At this session a list of seven priority areas was drawn up as follows (Caldwell, 1984:64):

1. human settlements;
2. land, water and desertification;
3. education, training, assistance and information;
4. trade, economics, and the transfer of technology;
5. oceans;
6. conservation of nature, wildlife and genetic resources; and
7. energy.

It is noteworthy that the following two concerns of importance to the North were completely dropped as 'priorities':

- identification and control of pollutants and nuisances of broad international significance;
- international organizational implications of action proposals.

As a non-executing organization, UNEP was not powerful measured by conventional UN standards. This power tends to be a function of an agency's programme budget. Yet the importance of its mission, its structure close to the center of the UN secretariat, and its autonomous Environment Fund made it a force with the potential to have an impact on the whole UN system, as well as on its member-states. UNEP's basic organizational components were the Governing Council, the Secretariat, the Environment Fund, and a unit called the Environment Coordination Board which, as we shall see later, was absorbed by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) in 1977. Its mandate may be subsumed in four "c"s: compile (scientific information), convince, coordinate, and catalyze.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL

At the Stockholm Conference the Governing Council was given the mandate to oversee the implementation of the 109 point Action Plan in cooperation with the existing UN organizations. It is the principal forum for international environmental debates. As such it is characterized by numerous diplomatic and political divisions, particularly along the North-South divide. This divide is not clear-cut, however. There are many divisions within each camp: e.g. the US versus the Nordics, or developing countries with large tropical forests versus those with serious desertification problems or major oil reserves. Also, national perspectives with regard to debt or foreign investment often differ among countries of the same geographical region.

#### 3.1. The Policy-Making Process

The Governing Council is UNEP's 'board of directors'. It represents UNEP's link with the General Assembly. Its mandate is spelled out in the UN General Assembly Resolution 2997(XXVII) which instituted UNEP on December 15, 1972. Its diplomatically worded mandate gives UNEP a global leadership mission in environmental matters. However, it is *de facto* just an advisory body that is obliged to respect the other UN organizations' autonomy.

The UN General Assembly elects UNEP's Governing Council from its member states for 3-year terms (one vote per state). Unless the Council decides upon a different procedure, the simple majority of all members present will carry a motion. The 58 members are chosen according to a regional distribution which has not been changed since it was established in 1972 (Kilian, 1987:259):

16 seats for African states,  
13 seats for Asian states,  
6 seats for Eastern European states,  
10 seats for Latin American states and  
13 seats for West European and other states  
(e.g. North America or South Pacific).

Member states which are not represented at any given time are entitled nevertheless to submit proposals which may be put to the vote by the request of any member of the Governing Council<sup>9</sup>. Furthermore, UN bodies and inter-governmental organizations may participate without the right of vote in the deliberations upon invitation of the president of the Council or of a committee chairperson. The agencies and UN bodies with which UNEP cooperates the most, such as FAO, UNESCO, WMO, WHO, and UNDP, are usually present. Finally, at the lowest level of activity, international NGOs may make oral statements; this permission, however, is not only subject to invitation but it also depends on the approval of the Governing Council.

Except for the first year in Geneva, the Governing Council has met in Nairobi every year until 1985, when a bi-annual cycle was introduced for financial reasons. There was no session in 1986 but since then a short special session was held in even years. The sessions so far have always taken place between March and June, before ECOSOC's summer session. At the end of every session, the secretariat composes detailed Proceedings for internal use which are published in a somewhat abridged form as 'Report of the Governing Council' once ECOSOC has reviewed and commented the Proceedings in its summer session. This Report together with ECOSOC's comments is then used by the General Assembly in the fall for final approval of the Governing Council's decisions.

In 1985 a decision was made to create an open-ended 'Committee of Permanent Representatives' consisting mostly of staff members of Embassies in Nairobi. It was to meet at least four times per year with the executive director or his representative. Its mandate is to monitor the secretariat's implementation of the Governing Council's decisions. This task gives it a potentially high profile but it has so far not lived up to these expectations and plays a rather minor and passive role. The fact that not many countries have Embassies in Kenya with staff members who are adequately specialized in international environmental affairs certainly plays an important role in this state of affairs.

In 1987 the Committee of Permanent Representatives was on the agenda of the Governing Council because the representative of France, supported by his Mexican colleague, initiated a motion which demanded full

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<sup>9</sup> Rules of Procedure of the Governing Council, UNEP/GC/3/Rev. 3, 4 January 1988, 42 p.

translation services for the Committee's reports in all six official UN languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish). He furthermore requested that a roll-call be taken on this motion, i.e. the publication of the voting record of all the national delegations in the Procedures and the official Report. Roll-calls are a rare event at the Governing Council and are usually reserved for issues which are of a highly political nature but of relatively little global environmental importance; for example 'the environmental situation in the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories' (decision 14/11 at the 1987 Governing Council).

This delicate diplomatic issue was discussed for two years. The executive director expressed clearly that he did not think that the General Assembly would shoulder the additional costs of US\$ 220,000 for the translation of reports which are of relatively minor importance. He offered, however, to have the secretariat translate up to 30 pages per meeting into French and Spanish. This compromise was rejected at the Governing Council presumably because it would have been considered discrimination against the Arabic, Chinese and Russian languages<sup>10</sup>.

Finally, the French withdraw their motion at the 1989 session to the great surprise of many participants. In a diplomatic face-saving manoeuvre, Decision 15/12 was adopted by consensus. It would make the full six-language translation services available "as soon as funding for the costs of these services can be provided from the regular budget of the United Nations"<sup>11</sup>. It was clearly understood that these costs can never be provided from the regular budget... This is an interesting example of a diplomatic solution to a political and financial problem. These kinds of problems are ubiquitous at the United Nations, and UNEP is very much concerned by them.

It should be emphasized that the policy-making process being discussed is placed at the institutional or 'macro' level. There can be no question here of analyzing this process in a 'micro' perspective at the level of the delegations or individual decision-makers negotiating in corridors and backrooms.

Governing Council decisions, like UN decisions and resolutions in general, tend to be very long-winded and repetitive, structured in numerous sections and subsections which start with introductions such as noting ..., approving ..., welcoming ..., recalling .... One should think that an effort could be made to streamline the proceedings, reports and decisions and make them more efficient and effective. It should be borne in mind, however, that

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<sup>10</sup> Provisions of language services for the meetings of the committee of permanent representatives to UNEP, UNEP/GC.15/11, 5 December, 1988, 9 p.

<sup>11</sup> P. 37, Decisions Adopted by the Governing Council at its 15th Session, Na.89-3253 - 1544E, 93 p.

this kind of language is very much part of the UN administrative process in which of course UNEP is embedded.

The Governing Council's '*decisions*' become '*resolutions*' only when they are accepted by the General Assembly. Thus UNEP must adhere to the UN's organizational culture, jargon and practices. As de Senarclens (1989:148) has noted for the United Nations, when conflicts are profound, negotiating endlessly over semantic details may be a way to arrive at least at some sort of a compromise. An equivocal compromise, without much real meaning, is usually far better than a complete breakdown of communications.

### 3.2. The Governing Council's Recent Policy Initiatives

In the formalized, slow and unwieldy UN context it is understandable that lengthy and extensive preparations are necessary before a major unit like UNEP embarks on an initiative of strategic importance with long-term implications and commitments. It is also a major diplomatic, political, organizational - not to mention financial - undertaking to bring a Council with 58 sovereign decision-makers to agree on a specific major project. Consequently it is necessary to concentrate efforts on the elaboration of focused policy documents.

The Governing Council is often criticized for spending - if not wasting - most of its time on the administration of the relatively modest Environment Fund, and for neglecting its principal mandate, i.e. to provide the secretariat with general policy guidance. This criticism is arguably justified, but one should not overlook those policy-making initiatives which the Council has taken, namely those decisions or groups of decisions which have been taken, mostly after long discussions and negotiations and detailed fine-tuning during several consecutive sessions that profoundly orient its programs and projects. In its second decade of existence, UNEP has undertaken four planning exercises which are of a strategic nature, namely:

- 1) an Environmental Perspective document,
- 2) a better reconciliation of Northern and Southern priorities,
- 3) the merging of environmental and developmental issues in the wake of the UNCED process,
- 4) the System-Wide Medium-Term Environment Programme 1990-1995 (SWMTEP).

### 3.2.1. The 'Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond'

The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) is the UN's highest-level coordinating mechanism since it assembles, under the chairmanship of the UN Secretary-General, the UN Agency and Programme heads - including UNEP's executive director. In 1981 ACC suggested that a long-term plan should be elaborated by UNEP which would deal with the major environmental issues of the next decades. This document would not only spell out goals and required actions but it would also, quite idealistically "set aspirational goals for the world community". This view was endorsed by the Governing Council by decision 9/3-III in 1981. The Council "authorized" the executive director "to consult with Governments and international organizations on the desirability, feasibility and financing" of a global 'Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond'<sup>12</sup>.

The formulation of this document was a huge planning exercise which would remain on the Council's agenda for the next six years. For the actual elaboration of the Perspective, the Council decided that a committee with representation of all regions should be created, and it set in motion an intergovernmental process, involving all states, the organizations and bodies of the UN system, as well as the scientific community.

In 1983 an open-ended Intergovernmental Intersessional Preparatory Committee (IIPC) was set up by the Governing Council for the preparation of UNEP's Environment Perspective. That document was destined for consideration by the General Assembly, after passing through the ECOSOC according to UNEP's usual reporting procedure. The widespread involvement and participation clearly showed the intention of ACC and the Governing Council to give the Environment Perspective a very high-profile exposure throughout the UN system.

At its 1987 session, the Governing Council finally adopted the document 'Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond'<sup>13</sup>, and recommended it for consideration and adoption to the General Assembly. The Council considers this Perspective a blueprint which will guide sustainable development and will serve as a basic document on which future medium-term (i.e. normally covering six years) system-wide environmental plans for the whole UN system should be built.

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<sup>12</sup> P. 8, Report of the Governing Council on the work of its ninth session, 13-26 May, 1981, GA Supplement No. 25 (A/36/25), New York, UN 1981, 154 p.

<sup>13</sup> *Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond*, Nairobi, UNEP, 1988, 34 p.

Shortly after this planning process got started, another similar exercise was initiated outside UNEP. In 1983 the General Assembly decided, through Resolution 38/161, to establish an Independent World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (originally it was called 'Special Commission' which conveys a lower profile). It was sponsored by Canada, Japan, the Netherlands, the Scandinavian countries and Switzerland (Fouéré, 1984). The Secretary-General subsequently appointed Norway's Prime Minister Gro Brundtland as chairperson of WCED. At that time, this initiative received little attention in the media, perhaps because two preceding Independent Commissions, namely the Brandt and the Palme Commission, failed to convince the leading nations to act on its recommendations. Mrs. Brundtland acted as the official figure head; the actual organization of the Commission's hearings in all parts of the world was carried out by its secretary-general Jim MacNeill, a Canadian, who was also the principal author of the 'Brundtland Report', which was published in over twenty languages under the title of *Our Common Future*<sup>14</sup>

As Fouéré points out, the main structural difference between the Brandt and the Palme Commissions on one hand, and this new one on the other hand, was that the former ones had no institutional link with governments or with the UN. The resolution to establish this new Commission, on the other hand, stipulated that the WCED Report had to be submitted for consideration by governments within two years. Even though such considerations do not guarantee any kind of a follow-up, they were intended to induce governments and UN bodies to face environmental issues and take a stand.

WCED's institutional structure should be seen in the international context of the early 1980s. Under President Reagan's guidance, the United States "relinquished its traditional role" (Fouéré, 1984: 33) as a leader in the promotion of international action on environmental and global resource issues. The United States' new policy greatly hindered international cooperation in fields such as crossborder transports of chemicals, transboundary air pollution and the Law of the Sea. The US ambassador to the UN, Jeane Kirkpatrick, and the head of the Environmental Protection Agency, Anne Burford, brought the US into open confrontation with other OECD countries. It is therefore a compliment to the Commission's diplomatic skills that its links with governments of quite different environmental views did not derail the whole project.

IIPC and WCED collaborated to some extent. There were seven consultative meetings between the two which was hardly an intensive exchange of ideas. Indeed, according to several interviewees, UNEP's leadership did not particularly welcome the establishment of the World Commis-

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<sup>14</sup>. *Our Common Future*, The World Commission on Environment and Development, New York, Oxford University Press, 1987, 400 p.

sion and considered it as a rather unnecessary intrusion into its bailiwick. This kind of a reaction, however, would certainly not be documented in the Governing Council's Proceedings. On the contrary, the Council, in decision 13/4 diplomatically "expresses its appreciation to the Special Commission for the cooperation with IIPC" ...<sup>15</sup>.

UNEP tried to exert control over the WCED and would have liked to annex its report to its own Environmental Perspective (Theisohn, 1990:63). It failed in this objective, however, because the Commission deliberately and rapidly developed a life of its own, much to the displeasure of many governments (p. 66),

and - one could certainly add - much to the displeasure of UNEP. Theisohn calls the relationship between WCED and IIPC "strenuous". It is fair to assume that any public agency would be at least somewhat displeased if an independent commission was mandated to hold extensive hearings on issues within its domain. In view of Dr. Tolba's already alluded to penchant to keep things under as much control as possible, such frictions would not be surprising. The fact that WCED did get established and was able to carry out its mandate arguably reflected a desire on the part of the international community to prevent control of environmental matters by a single agency.

On December 11, 1987, the General Assembly *adopted* UNEP's *Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond* by Resolution 42/186, and it *welcomed* the WCED Report by Resolution 42/187. Ever since, these two Resolutions 42/186 and 42/187 have been cited in countless documents throughout the UN system - perhaps more often than any other non-military Resolution in the history of the UN. The two resolutions spread over several pages and contain many subsections. The crucial section of Resolution 42/186 reads as follows:

The General Assembly *adopts* the Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond, as a broad framework to guide national action and international cooperation on policies and programmes aimed at achieving environmentally sound development, and specifically as a guide to the preparation of further system-wide medium-term environment programmes and the medium-term programmes of the organization and bodies of the United Nations system.

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<sup>15</sup> Proceedings of the Governing Council at its 13th session, Nairobi, 14-24 May, 1985, UNEP/GC.13/16, 12 June, 1985.

It is understandable that the General Assembly gave a stronger backing to UNEP's Environmental Perspective than to the Independent Commission's Report, because it was done by one of its own organs. Outside the UN, however, and perhaps even within, the Commission's report became far better known, and it received much more press coverage than UNEP's Environmental Perspective thanks to its publication in the form of *Our Common Future*. This publication has contributed significantly to the process of world-wide environmental sensitization. The World Commission on Environment and Development continues to exist in Geneva thanks to contributions from the Norwegian government.

In conclusion, the work of WCED and IIPC has been instrumental in preparing the terrain for the 1992 Rio Conference by integrating environmental and developmental issues. Even though the public at large was not made aware of UNEP's Environmental Perspective, one should not underestimate the impact it achieved through the long and extensive process of discussions and negotiations on environmental matters which it generated among intergovernmental and governmental diplomats and civil servants.

### 3.2.2. A Better Focus on the Reconciliation of Northern and Southern Priorities

UNEP is often criticized for getting involved in too many different areas, i.e. for spreading its scarce resources too thin over too many sectors. The 1989 Governing Council has made decisions which should help to correct this tendency. The secretariat was enjoined to *carry out fewer, but more substantial projects*. It was given the following six priority areas (Decision 15/1)<sup>16</sup>:

1. protection of the *atmosphere* by combating climate change and depletion of the ozone layer,
2. protection of the quality of *freshwater*,
3. protection of *oceans and costal areas*,
4. protection of land resources by combating *deforestation and desertification*,
5. protection of *biological diversity*, and
6. environmentally sound management of *hazardous wastes and toxic chemicals*.

It should be added that *environmentally sound management of biotechnology and threats to living and working conditions of the poor resulting*

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<sup>16</sup>. Decisions adopted by the Governing Council at its 15th session, Nairobi, 15-26 May, 1989, Na. 89-3253 - 1544E.

from environmental degradation were considered, but in the end were not included among the main priorities.

Let us now analyze the evolution of UNEP's priorities since its inception. If we go back to the preparation of the 1972 Stockholm conference, we notice that one of the six subject areas, namely "international organizational implications of action proposals" (Caldwell, 1984:54) has been dropped from subsequent lists of priorities. In view of UNEP's coordination mandate, one should have expected, on the contrary, that this subject would receive considerable attention. Thus, it is very significant that it was dropped, which presumably reflects a reduction in the emphasis on coordination on the part of the Governing Council.

If we look at the next stage, i.e. the focus given to UNEP by the first Session of the 1973 Governing Council in Geneva (Caldwell, 1984:64), we notice, in comparison with the 1989 priorities, a substantial revamping of UNEP's areas of concentration. Four out of seven items have disappeared from the original priority list:

- human settlements,
- education, training, assistance and information,
- trade, economics and the transfer of technology,
- energy.

On the other hand, two items are new among the list of six items:

- combating climate change and depletion of the ozone layer,
- environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes and toxic chemicals.

If this evolution is put into the context of NorthSouth negotiations over environmental priorities, the question arises: which side has turned out to be more influential? The four areas eliminated from the original agenda are all Third World priorities. The fact that they have been eliminated from UNEP's list of priorities, however, doesn't necessarily indicate a loss for the Third World. Rather, it can be interpreted as an overdue recognition of the fact that these four areas should never have been on UNEP's priority list in the first place because they are at the center of the missions of HABITAT, UNESCO, UNCTAD and the World Bank. UNEP has never done much in these four areas with the exception of environmental education and information, and even there most of the projects are carried out by UNESCO. On the other hand, has the First World gained from the two additions? Let us look at each one separately.

Depletion of the ozone layer and the resulting increase in ultraviolet radiation represents a considerable threat to Third World populations who are largely working in the field and exposed to the sun. Skin pigmentation may increase their resistance to skin cancer but they are likely to suffer more from an increased incidence of such health problems as eye cataracts and impairment of the immune system. Potentially slower plant and algae growth will also hit the poorest hardest. People in the North, on the other hand, are affected by the fact that ozone depletion is greatest near the poles although they are relatively protected in their offices and factories.

Climate changes are a threat to the US Midwestern farmer as much as to his colleague in Nepal or Bolivia. But there is no question that crop failures hit poor countries much harder than rich ones who can always buy food at somewhat higher prices on the international markets.

Transboundary air pollution was also dropped from the list of six priorities. In 1972 this was clearly much more a concern for the North than for the South. But things have changed since then. Acid rain and high ground-level ozone concentrations used to be the 'prerogative' of highly industrialized countries. This is no longer the case, even though the origin of these pollutants are often different. Over the Amazon forests, very high acidity levels were measured during the dry season as a result of the huge forest fires. Pollution levels comparable to those in Europe or North America have recently also been measured over African rain forests from the Congo basin to the West coast. Separate teams of scientists from France and Germany discovered that this pollution is "... largely caused by man-made fires that range for months across thousands of miles of African savannas. Farmers and herdsmen set the fires to clear shrubs and to stimulate the growth of crops and grass" (Simons, 1989).

The other new issue, management of hazardous wastes, also originally a First World preoccupation, has suddenly become a major preoccupation for developing countries. Starting with disclosures about the dumping of hazardous wastes in Nigeria by an Italian firm, several similar cases came to light in other countries, especially in Africa. For instance, Bénin had signed a ten-year contract to store up to a million tons of chemical and radio-active wastes per year from several European countries at US\$ 3.- per ton. Guinea-Bissau cancelled plans to take 15 million tons of toxic waste from Western countries in exchange for US\$ 600 million, three times the country's gross national product, in the mid-1980s. In the industrialized countries, on the other hand, the disposal costs of toxic wastes are very much higher and steadily increasing<sup>17</sup>.

The economic incentives for such transactions are enormous. For small and indebted African countries, the huge rewards offered through mid-

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<sup>17</sup>. "Africa: Europe's Poison Dumping Pit", *Kenya Times*, December 11, 1988, p.22.

dlemen are very tempting. After its experience with hazardous wastes, Nigeria tried at the November 1988 GATT negotiations in Montreal to obtain measures which would curb exports of hazardous wastes. The proposal received widespread support from Third World delegations but was opposed by the U.S. and the European Community. A valid point raised was that a complete ban would certainly lead to a widening of the illicit hazardous waste trade<sup>18</sup>. (Additional information on UNEP's role in the 1989 Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes is provided in Annex No. 10).

The dividing line which separated environmental threats and issues into Northern and Southern concerns at the Stockholm conference has largely disappeared, or at least it has become less pronounced. Serious environmental problems such as desertification, deforestation, soil degradation, or health threats due to unsafe drinking water and inappropriate irrigation schemes, mostly resulting from shortsighted, incompetent or even corrupt development policies, have also done much to convince governments of developing countries of the urgency to protect their natural resources. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that the 1992 Rio Conference has shown that the linkage of environmental problems with economic and financial issues is seen very differently in the North, the South and the East.

Without disputing that some environmental issues are indeed more of a concern to one side or the other (e.g. biological diversity for the North or drinking water for the South), one can conclude that UNEP's new priorities are, on the whole, equally important for the North and the South. It seems to me that there was no 'winner' or 'loser' in the recomposition of UNEP's priority list. Hopefully, people everywhere now realize that environmental issues are world-wide in their impact and require global attention.

Politically speaking, the Governing Council tends to be cautious. It usually manages to avoid irritating any governments. The main exception was South Africa during the culmination of its apartheid period. In a strongly worded condemnation, the Council noted that the degradation of agricultural soils in South Africa was due to heavy overuse caused by the apartheid regime's distorted land distribution. In 1986 the 4.5 million whites were enjoying 86.7% of the land while the 23 million blacks were left with 13.3%. At least three million blacks have been forcibly removed from 'white land'<sup>19</sup>.

Due to the highly political nature of UNEP, given its status as a United Nations Programme, a balancing of the North's and the South's priorities is essential for its support from both sides and consequently, one might expect,

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<sup>18</sup>. "Dispute over Toxic Wastes (Nigeria/GATT)", *The Weekly Review*, Nairobi, November, 18, 1988, p. 42.

<sup>19</sup>. Environmental impacts of apartheid on black agriculture in South Africa (consultant's report), 1987, UNEP/GC.14/4/Add. 1, p. 4)

for its long-term success as an institution. A further discussion of this balance is therefore in order. The re-orientation of the Governing Council's priority areas, which emerged from its 1989 Session, put in the context of international and scientific developments, has gone a long way in addressing the political and economic North-South conflict - as much as can reasonably be expected from an environmental institution with a modest budget. Ness & Brechin (1988:262) see considerable potential for UNEP to make a contribution in alleviating the North-South conflict:

To the extent that the technology shows, as it does, that pollution does not respect national boundaries, it can be a force for greater international integration. It should not be forgotten, however, that the creation of UNEP involved a storm of economic conflict between the more and less developed countries of the world (Caldwell, 1984). The extent to which this conflict is fuelled or dampened by the technology of international environmental monitoring and management represents, at the very least, an important research question for international organization.

The new list of six priorities did not significantly restrict the secretariat's latitude. This more realistic outlook of its member delegations allowed the Council to redefine its domain in a way which makes it better able to make the best use of its limited resources, while it continues to enjoy political support from all geographical regions. To put these conclusion in Ness and Brechin's terminology, one can say that UNEP has indeed been successful in dampening the North-South conflict by using the technology of environmental monitoring and management.

UNEP has been helped in the reconfiguration of its domain by the fact that developing countries have become more aware of the necessity to protect their natural resources. Because of their crucial reliance on agriculture, fishing and firewood, a careful use of their natural endowment is far more important for them than for the industrialized countries which can much easier replace their own lost or spoiled natural resources through importation of food and commodities like wood or cotton.

This generally positive view of UNEP's new priorities needs to be qualified, however, by an important reservation. A very serious problem for developing countries is that world-wide food demand is expected to double by the year 2030, but no long-term agricultural experiments exceeding a duration of 30 years have been conducted anywhere except a few in temperate industrialized countries. This means that sustained benefits from the Green Revolution have to be considered as uncertain (Shiva, 1991).

This uncertainty over long-term effects may apply even more to agricultural applications of genetic engineering technologies, such as transgenic biopesticides which

confer plants with a built-in resistance to insects by transferring a gene that expresses a naturally occurring toxin (a biotoxin) into their cells (Hindmarsh, 1991:198).

This technological trend has increased the farmers' dependence on agribusiness and chemical inputs, and at the same time has dramatically reduced the variety of crop species (Kloppenborg, 1988). It is being pushed with little public debate by a multibillion dollar industry which imposes the biggest risk on the rural poor in developing countries because they lack alternative food sources.

The World Bank's *1992 Development Report* which has 'Development and the Environment' as this year's theme is cautious with regard to the long-term effects of these synthetic agricultural inputs (p. 138)<sup>20</sup>:

Although many of the results of trials in temperate areas are transferable, the different soils, cropping practices, and pest and disease problems in most in developing countries limit the usefulness of these conclusions. Studies initiated during the colonial period in many African and Asian countries have been stopped, and data from them go unanalyzed.

Relatively recent work of shorter duration is beginning to hint at the potential value of long-term trials in tropical agriculture. The International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines began in 1964 to monitor trends on continuously cultivated paddy fields. These studies have started to reveal slow yield declines, caused by increased pest pressure, depletion of soil micronutrients, and buildup of harmful chemicals from low-quality irrigation water. Only long-term observation will make possible understanding and management of these problems.

UNEP ought to get involved in these kinds of long-term scientific trials in tropical agriculture. FAO would presumably claim that this is its business and that the situation is under control. Unlike UNEP, however, FAO is far from being an unbiased scientific investigator. On the contrary, it is deeply committed to the promotion of the Green Revolution and is influenced by its close

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<sup>20</sup> *World Development Report 1992 - Development and the Environment*, Washington, DC, Published for the World Bank by Oxford University Press, 1992, 308 p.

links with the agrochemical industry (Dinham, 1991). In order to feed a quickly growing world population, agriculture everywhere is relying increasingly on chemical inputs which may form new toxic compounds by reacting with various and often diffuse kinds of pollution. No one knows what their combined long-term effects will be, but it is easy to see that a wide-spread reduction in sustainable yields or weakened plant resilience could have catastrophic consequences.

UNEP might respond that this task is not included in its six priorities. It is very regrettable that the two priorities *environmentally sound management of biotechnologies* and *threats to the living and working conditions of the poor resulting from environmental degradation* have been dropped from the priority list at the 1989 Governing Council. These long-term agricultural experiments fall under these two headings and would be within UNEP's financial capacity, especially if it shares the task with other organizations. It is short-sighted of the Governing Council that it did not make them one of UNEP's priorities because there is simply no other UN body available to take the responsibility for them. There is a major threat here, not only for the South but also for the North, in view of concerns about high levels of pesticides in imported food, not to mention hormones and antibiotics in imported meat. The old adage that prevention is far cheaper than restoration is particularly pertinent here!

The 1989 session of the Governing Council was important for another reason with regard to UNEP's re-positioning in the North-South conflict. For the first time the Governing Council gave some support to financial claims of developing countries which go back to the New International Economic Order of the 1970s.

In Decision 15/16 the Council

invites governments, international multilateral credit organizations and non-governmental organizations to consider taking into account the Declaration of Brasilia as a frame of reference for international cooperation with developing countries.

The Declaration is annexed to the decision; it contains an attempt to revive the New International Economic Order (NIEO). The NIEO was the subject of a special UN General Assembly Session in 1974 which was called by the countries belonging to the 'Group of 77'. The NIEO was to be based on "equity, sovereign equality, interdependence, common interest, and cooperation among all states" (LeRoy, 1980:260). Against the vigorous resistance of the United States and some other Western industrialized countries, the majority of the UN members adopted in 1974 the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States which remained unfulfilled rhetoric. Unfortunately, the NIEO did not achieve any substantial improvement for the Third World during

the rest of the decade and was completely wiped off the negotiating table in 1980 by the advent of Reaganism. In the early 1980s global negotiations on the implementation of the Charter were planned, but the Reagan Administrations prevented this from happening. Maybe these Third World demands will be more acceptable to the industrialized countries if they are wrapped up in environmental measures; at the same time, however, they are competing against new emergencies from the Eastern European countries and the former Soviet Union in the context of a global recession.

In the light of the failure of the United Nations to significantly reform the global economic system, realistic expectations for any UNEP initiative to improve the economic situation of the Third World should certainly be rather modest. The one point where UNEP's efforts have some chance of succeeding is in the area of foreign debt reduction for developing countries. The Governing Council's Decision 15/6 calls on creditor governments and institutions to reduce their demands on developing countries regarding debt servicing "in order to strengthen their capacity to address the critical environmental issues fundamental to development and protection of the environment".

These efforts are quite in line with general trends since the industrialized countries are starting to realize that many impoverished and heavily indebted countries will not be able to meet scheduled interest payments under any circumstances, and that debt, development and the environment are inextricably linked with each other. For example, Canada's Finance Minister and Governor at the World Bank, Michael Wilson, supported, at the 1988 annual World Bank meeting in Berlin, efforts to alleviate the debt burden. Unfortunately, the Ministry's press release on this subject is rather vague about the implementation of such measures<sup>21</sup>.

UNEP's efforts at the 1989 Governing Council to link debt alleviation with the capacity of Third World governments to act decisively on the protection of their environment certainly is right on target. One might add that the World Bank indeed does admit that it committed errors in the past, especially with regard to the environmental impact of its loans<sup>22</sup>, and that it has learned from them. At the same time, however, it continues to collect interest payments on loans which as the Bank knows were used to finance projects which caused undue environmental damages or which were economic failures or both. This means of course that it (or the First World) is learning the practice of sustainable development at the expense of its debtor countries...

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<sup>21</sup> Ministry of Finance, Ottawa, Information Release No. 88-126, September 27, 1988, 9 p.

<sup>22</sup> P. 11, *The World Bank and the Environment, First Annual Report Fiscal 1990*, Washington DC, The World Bank, 1990, 102 p.

As developing countries abuse natural resources for short term economic results, such as interest payments on old loans, they will have difficulties in achieving political stability. Political stability of the South of course is very much in the interest of the industrialized countries. It cannot be expected that a government facing food riots will give a high priority to long-term investments to protect the environment.

North-South negotiations contain an additional twist which further complicates these issues: the equator isn't always the political dividing line. There are cases, like the principle of empowering supranational authorities at the expense of national sovereignty, where the US and the developing countries are siding on the same front facing the Europeans, with the Japanese placed somewhere in between. An example of this alliance was the negotiations over environmental crime provisions at UNCED. The US and the G77 wanted such provisions to apply only in times of war, whereas the Europeans wanted them also for peace time. It was perhaps not a coincidence that the influential Malaysian ambassador Razali Ismail was chairing these negotiations which led to the victory of the US - G77 coalition (Bernstein, 1992:23).

Finally, an important and new phenomenon has been emerging out of the UNCED process: the former socialist countries do not want to be termed "developed"; at the same time they are not welcome in the G77 or other negotiating groups of the developing countries because of well-founded fears that a substantial portion of economic assistance will be re-directed from the South to the East. As a consequence, we are now witnessing the emergence of a third bloc called countries *in economic transition*. Some industrialized countries, Germany among them, promoted the acceptance of this third bloc with the promise that they would help them without decreasing assistance to the South<sup>23</sup>. It remains to be seen whether and to what extent this new constellation will replace the North-South dichotomy in the international political arena, and what the consequences will be for the UN in general and UNEP in particular.

In conclusion, the 1989 Governing Council has finally reacted decisively to the widespread criticism that UNEP scatters its activities too thinly over too many different activities by giving it a more focused mission. It has reduced its unrealistic developmental pretensions while retaining a balanced attitude toward conflicting demands from the North and the South. At the end of the 1980s UNEP has like many institutions become leaner and more efficient by shedding parts of its mandate which it should never have been burdened with. Unfortunately, it failed to face its responsibility in the

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<sup>23</sup> Editorial by Wolfgang E. Burhenne and Marlene Jahnke, *Environmental Policy and Law*, August 1992, Vol. 22/4.

area of long-term trials in tropical agriculture. On the positive side, it has taken a positive stance with regard to debt relief.

### 3.2.3 UNCED: the Convergence of Environment and Development

The year 1987 was crucially important in international environmental affairs. It can be considered as the year in which the UN and most governments started to pay significant attention to the fact that mankind is starting to strain the earth's carrying capacity - five years before most of the media caught on to the subject in the wake of the 1992 Rio Conference (Head, 1991:216; MacNeill, 1991:5; Porter and Welsh Brown, 1991:29). Three events of historical significance happened in this area: the Montreal Ozone Protocol, the embracing by the UN General Assembly of the 'Brundtland Report' on sustainable development, and the restructuring of the World Bank which resulted, among other things, in a new Environment Department and in new policies for the distribution of over US\$ 20 billion in loans, giving much more emphasis to environmental concerns.

The new macro-strategy which the UN adopted by the support it gave to the concept of sustainable development through Resolution 42/187 is essentially based on a *linkage* of economic development policies to long-term environmental concerns on one hand, and on *solidarity* between the North and the South on the other hand. Because issues cannot be linked in an organizational network without some sort of coordination, one should expect a renewed emphasis on the coordination part of UNEP's mandate.

The international environmental affairs literature pays relatively little attention to UNEP as an organization presumably because its Nairobi secretariat is impractical to do research on and because its very widespread and intertwined activities are difficult to overview and analyze. One might add that with few exceptions such as UNESCO, the World Bank, the IMF and perhaps FAO there is a general lack of analytical literature on UN institutions. When UNEP is mentioned, authors tend to recommend that its status, role and resources be enhanced (e.g. Edwards, 1988:272; MacNeill et al., 1991:121; Plant, 1990:425).

What we are observing here in the wake of the Environmental Perspective and the World Commission on Environment and Development is a *convergence* of environmental and developmental issues. The title of the recent book by MacNeill et al. (1991) expresses this message concisely: *Beyond Interdependence - the Meshing of the World's Economy and the Earth's Ecology*. The authors argue that developing countries now have not only the population numbers, but increasingly also the technological means, to wreak great damage to the global environment. Consequently they conclude that the industrial countries are becoming motivated in their official

development assistance not only by humanitarian concerns, but also by fear of global problems such as climate change or ozone depletion. The UNCED process arguably confirms this assessment.

In addition to the adoption of more focused North-South priorities, the Governing Council's 1989 Session was remarkable for another important policy clarification. Council decisions are sometimes very long and subdivided in many parts and annexes. Decision 15/2 which covers nine pages addresses the implementation of UNEP's Environmental Perspectives and the World Commission on Environment and Development Report. The decision focuses on 'new environmental concerns' which are part of UNEP's long-term strategy. As a starting point it provides a non-binding definition of the concept of *sustainable development*. Even though this definition does not have unanimous support, for instance the US and many developing countries don't accept it, it is worthwhile to quote it here because of its wide ramifications and implications<sup>24</sup>:

The Governing Council believes that sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs and does not imply in any way encroachment upon national sovereignty.

The Governing Council considers that the achievement of sustainable development involves cooperation within and across national boundaries. It implies progress towards national and international equity, including assistance to developing countries in accordance with their national development plans, priorities and objectives. It implies, further, the existence of a supportive international economic environment that would result in sustained economic growth and development in all countries, particularly in developing countries, which is of major importance for sound management of the environment. It also implies the maintenance, rational use and enhancement of the natural resource base that underpins ecological resilience and economic growth. Sustainable development further implies incorporation of environmental concerns and considerations in development planning and policies, and does not represent a new form of conditionality in aid or development financing.

The definition is remarkable for its insistence on the respect of national sovereignty, which reflects the political tradition on which the United Nations Organization has been built. However, if one looks at recent voluntarily accepted encroachments on national sovereignty such as the 1990 and 1992

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<sup>24</sup> P. 18, 1989 Governing Council, 15th session, *loc. cit.*

revisions of the Ozone Protocol, the 1989 Convention on Transboundary Wastes Movements or, on another level, the project of a North American Free Trade Agreement and the European Community, then this definition appears somewhat out of date; a more contemporary perspective on sustainable development as well as on national sovereignty should include the promotion of binding international environmental agreements.

The definition also reflects the fear of developing countries that future aid may be conditioned on environmental stipulations which may conflict with their own objectives (e.g. a short pay-off period). There are undoubtedly many reasons which justify this fear of a new form of conditionalities, which conceptually can be compared to IMF conditionalities. It is unlikely, however, that institutions like the UNDP, the World Bank or governmental bilateral aid agencies will relax their environmental screening process. On the contrary, the environmental impact assessment for new projects is rightfully becoming more demanding because of often disastrous experiences in the past when such considerations were neglected. The real debate is over funding increments to cover these environmental measures.

The third major policy initiative of UNEP's 1989 Governing Council refers to the 1992 Conference which UNEP hoped to organize twenty years after Stockholm as a follow-up to its first ten-year review which it organized in Nairobi in 1982. It hoped to have it in Nairobi again, which would have allowed the secretariat to control the whole process. The UN General Assembly had already started to put in motion, through Resolution 43/196, preparations for an environmental conference in 1992 which was originally suggested by the World Commission on Environment and Development<sup>25</sup>. UNEP acted on this Resolution by establishing an ambitious list of objectives that the conference should consider<sup>26</sup>:

- a review of the state of the environment 20 years after the Stockholm Conference,
- strategies for reaching specific governmental commitments in the field of the environment,
- guidelines for preventive action,
- promotion of technology transfer to developing nations,
- recommendations for improving the UN system's capacity to deal with environmental emergencies,
- specific commitments to combat poverty through sustainable development and economic growth,

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<sup>25</sup>. *Our Common Future, 1987, op. cit.* p. 343.

<sup>26</sup>. P. 24, Decisions adopted by the Governing Council at its 15th session, Nairobi, 15-26 May, 1989, Na. 89-3253 - 1544E.

- strengthening of environmental institutions,
- promotion of environmental education, and
- perhaps most important: a specific and quantified strategy to implement the conference's decisions through traditional and innovative measures.

From its first preliminary and preparatory decisions, the *UNCED process*, as the negotiations and discussions concerning the Conference became to be known, was mired in the North-South conflict. At issue was the extent to which the economic development issues of greatest importance to developing countries should be included. Discussions at some Permanent Missions to the UN revealed that as late as summer 1989 some industrial countries were still opposed to an explicit and integrated inclusion of development issues and tried to narrow down negotiations to more technical and scientific environmental issues. The industrialized countries always fear additional financial demands as soon as developmental issues are linked with environmental problems.

UNEP itself was not spared some soul-searching in this regard. Although it took a very broad and encompassing view of environmental issues, the 1989 Governing Council cautiously stated that it "does not favor emphasis on the development aspect which would require a different forum, and different objectives and scope than those set by the General Assembly in 1988"<sup>27</sup>. Clearly, at this point in time there was no consensus at the Governing Council to fully integrate developmental aspects into its mandate.

The fall 1989 General Assembly session saw very heated debates at the Second Committee on this issue. In mid-December, 1989, it was uncertain whether a Resolution on the Conference could be adopted without reconvening in January. Finally, on the last possible day before the Christmas break, December 22, 1989, Resolution 44/228 was adopted at the General Assembly without a vote by 85 members, which provided for the UN Conference on Environment and Development to be held in Brazil for two weeks in June 1992<sup>28</sup>.

Important as the Governing Council's 1989 session was in defining UNEP's policies, the 1991 session turned out to be even more influential. These two meetings thoroughly reformulated the organization's mission. The Council's attitude regarding the very touchy subject of integrating developmental concerns into its environmental tasks had changed dramati-

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<sup>27</sup>. "Decade of Decision", Statement by Dr. Mostafa K. Tolba, to ECOSOC, 13 July, 1989, New York, UNEP, Information 89/43, 6 p.

<sup>28</sup>. United Nations - Resolutions and Decisions Adopted by the General Assembly During the First Part of its forty-fourth Session, From 19 September to 29 December 1989, 669 p.

cally from the very timid support it gave to such a comprehensive approach back in 1989. *Decision 16/2* of the Governing Council of 31 May 1991 was devoted to the *Integration of environment and development*<sup>29</sup>. It requested the secretariat to put particular emphasis on facilitating technology transfer for sustainable development, on trying to *link* existing environmental data bases with new developmental data, and on making them available to developing countries. It was furthermore decided that the 1993 session

will particularly focus on the integration of environment and development in the programme of UNEP and in the follow-up actions arising from the decisions of UNCED.

The executive director was requested

to ensure that all documentation for future sessions of the Governing Council reflects an integrated approach to developmental and environmental concerns, as appropriate.

Decision 16/2 is arguably the most important policy decision that the Governing Council has ever taken, it has profound implications for UNEP. This decision changes the very nature of UNEP from an environmental agency into an integrated environment and development agency or a sustainable development agency, although it is clear that the principle focus will remain on the environment. As we shall see, this changes UNEP's position in the organizational configuration of the United Nations system, in fact it changes the system itself. Of course it is not this particular decision which has all these effects, rather the opposite, Decision 16/2 reflects a new reality which is no longer compatible with the traditional neat division between environmental and developmental issues and institutions. This new reality and its institutional ramifications are a direct result of the UNCED process.

With UNCED, UNEP had lost a battle, but with Decision 16/2 it has won a war. It did not get a twenty-year celebration and has completely lost control over the UNCED process. In return, however, it gained something much bigger than a nice anniversary, namely the recognition that from now on it has a much bigger role to play in development discussions. On the whole, one may conclude that Dr. Tolba has made an excellent "deal" for UNEP in the definition of the organization's institutional domain.

The integration of environment and development called for in Decision 16/2 is also the subject of the UN General Assembly's Resolution

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<sup>29</sup>. UNEP Governing Council, 16th session, Nairobi, 20-31 May 1991, Proceedings of the Governing Council, 157 p.

45/210 on the relation between environment and international trade<sup>30</sup>. Of all the complex intersectoral issues before the UN, this may well be the most difficult one to handle. It is challenging enough to reach agreements between the North and the South which may satisfy labor unions, transnational corporations and farmers; bringing in the environment as a further consideration makes this nexus of problems nearly intractable. It is presumably the complexity and the political tension of this relationship which prevented it from being included as one of the items on UNCED's blueprint, *Agenda 21*. It is expected, however, that it will be at the center of the next GATT 'Round', and it seems likely that UNEP will then, for the first time, deal seriously with GATT. The GATT secretariat has taken the position in a recent Report 'Trade and the Environment' which it prepared for UNCED that the environmental impact of trade isn't really its problem<sup>31</sup>. In defending the objective of free trade GATT went as far as denouncing import standards which may influence the behaviour of another country even if they are non-discriminatory. This would have far-reaching implications for the trade-environment relationship (Charnovitz, 1992:205) because any environmental regulation or standard in a major country can influence the environmental impact of exporters in all other countries wishing to reach this market.

The OECD has done some important preliminary work. Its Environment and its Trade Directorates have published in-depth discussion papers, as well as a joint report for a ministerial meeting in the summer of 1991<sup>32</sup>. GATT Article XX which allows certain protectionist measures, provided they protect human or animal life and health, was challenged by Mexico which insisted on catching tuna with so-called purse-seine nets which kill hundreds of thousands of dolphins every year world-wide unintentionally along with the tuna catch.<sup>33</sup> This was an historic test case which pitted environmental concerns against free trade. In September 1991 a GATT dispute resolution panel ruled that the US was not allowed to maintain an embargo on Mexican tuna caught in this manner. The fact that GATT did not recognize the priority of Article XX over economic trade interests set "a dangerous precedent for future disputes" (French, 1992:9).

In explaining this decision the panel invented the term *extrajurisdictionality* without however defining it. Charnovitz (1992:208) induces from context that this term covers activities outside one's country.

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<sup>30</sup>. P. 85, UNEP 1990 Annual Report of the Executive Director, Nairobi, UNEP, 1991, 129 p.

<sup>31</sup>. "Trade and Environment", Geneva, GATT Discussion Paper (for UNCED), advance copy dated February 7, 1992.

<sup>32</sup>. OECD, "Trade and Environment - Joint Report by the Trade and Environment Committees", (Council at Ministerial Level), Paris, 14, May 1991.

<sup>33</sup>. "GATT - Marine Mammal Protection Act", *Environmental Policy and Law*, vol. 21/5&6, December 1991, pp. 214-215.

Unlike the term *extraterritoriality* which refers to domestic laws imposed outside one's borders, this term is vague, for example it is not clear whether it covers simultaneously domestic and non-domestic activities. He points out that there are

... good ecological reasons to reject jurisdictionality as a GATT principle. Although both the Tuna-Dolphin decision and the GATT Report attempt to distinguish between a nation's own environment and the rest of the world's environment, this segregation is unhelpful in dealing with natural resources not located in any country's jurisdiction (for example, the ozone layer), or with resources that migrate (for example, birds). If no country is allowed to take extrajurisdictional action, then much of our biosphere would be unreachable by environmental trade measures (p. 210).

It is in the interest of the protection of the ecosystem that nations have the option of unilateral action. For example, the US position on the protection of dolphins "has contributed to the reversal Mexico's longtime intransigence regarding an intergovernmental agreement on dolphin protection (p. 207)". The recently more assertive - unilateral - stance of the Canadian government in protecting the East coast fish stocks against overfishing by foreign factory vessels represents another example which shows the necessity for nations to be able to defend natural resources outside their boundaries. Ideally, international conventions are the best solution, but these tend to have many loopholes, take a long time to negotiate, and of course they may or may not be signed and ratified by any given country.

One of the critical points to be negotiated in future environmental talks at the GATT is the establishment of "sound scientific evidence" guiding the elaboration and application of harmonized environment and health standards. It will also be crucial that protectionist measures established for the conservation of natural resources be *transparent* and also applicable to domestic industry - there is often a suspicion that the environment is used as an excuse for economic motives. An interesting proposition is made by von Moltke (1992). He suggests a *mutual tariff* which would be added to commodity prices to provide funds for environmental restoration; the particular twist lies in the fact that they would normally be applied by the exporting countries, but if competing exporters wouldn't add them to the price in order to be more competitive they would be added by the importing countries participating in this regulatory system.

It should be stressed that the relationship between international trade and the environment is also, in spite of its importance, particularly difficult to investigate because at this point in time there is hardly any specific institutionally oriented literature available on this relationship. What is available is

usually buried in think tanks, governmental or intergovernmental organizations, and it is often classified. Undoubtedly, the interconnected issues of trade, technology transfer, services and environmental protection will get much more attention in the future, and UNEP seems to be in the process of positioning itself to face these exceedingly delicate political problems.

One may wonder if UNEP has taken on more than it can handle since its resources are already stretched very thinly. This has to be a concern indeed but one needs to consider that money and influence are much more concentrated in economic development than in the protection of the environment. In the light of this simple economic and political fact, which presumably applies to all countries, UNEP has certainly been strengthened by Decision 16/2.

The convergence of environment and international development must now be considered as a major new phenomenon influencing many aspects of international relations. As a matter of fact, what we are witnessing here is exactly what Thomas Kuhn (1970) called a *paradigm shift*: the environment has shifted from being a concern dealing with pollution control and the protection of nature to being a cornerstone of sustainable development. The term sustainable development is now firmly ingrained in today's vocabulary. There are a few other terms with a similar albeit somewhat more specific meaning which are used sometimes, most notably the terms 'Natural Resource Accounting' or 'Environmental Accounting' (Bartelmus, 1992; Ahmad et al., 1989; Repetto, 1988). Allenby (1992:56) used the term 'Industrial Ecology' for the principles and the process which inform sustainable development policies. Murphy (1992:24) puts the emphasis on the North-South relation through the term 'Global Keynesians'. Boulding (1981) made an attempt to bring the environment into a framework he calls 'Evolutionary Economics'.

As a result of this perceptual paradigm shift, one can observe now at the institutional level that *the environment has moved from being an organizational sector to being a functional dimension of socio-economic and political policies*. This move has a profound impact on UNEP's organizational environment. That is why UNEP has worked actively for the last couple of years on a reassessment of its position within the UN system. The redefinition of its domain in 1989 and 1991 has given it an institutional base on which it can build its strategies for the 1990s.

UNEP's domain has been strongly influenced by the UNCED process. It is too early to tell, what the direct results of the actual decisions are on UNEP, but there is no doubt that the process leading up to it has considerably strengthened the environmental perspectives on the agenda of multilateral

development. The four big Preparatory Committees (PrepComs)<sup>34</sup> were all major international conferences in their own right, which brought together for intensive and lengthy negotiations a large number of politicians, diplomats, and government and UN officials. The PrepComs have gone a long way toward sensitizing the participants about the necessity to take action to protect the regional and global ecosystems. The UN has embraced at least rhetorically the sustainable development perspective. Since this perspective stresses the *link* between environmental and economic issues, it is very fitting that UNEP on its side will take a stronger interest in economic issues.

As far as the two weeks of the Rio Conference were concerned, UNEP remained notably absent from the limelight. Presumably it had not much to hope for from the conference except the customary call for strengthening UNEP which is predictably made in sections 38.21-23 of Agenda 21<sup>35</sup>. As far as this historic event is concerned, one may conclude as Vaillancourt (1992:5) does that the official UN conference, the summit meeting, and the vast parallel NGO conference 'Global Forum' all represent a milestone in the process of *integrating* the environment into economic development which was started at the 1971 Founex meeting near Geneva in preparation for the 1972 Stockholm Conference.

#### 3.2.4. The United Nations System-Wide Medium-Term Environment Programme (SWMTEP) 1990-95

Back in 1981 the executive director submitted a project for a SWMTEP to the Governing Council which was accepted by decision 9/10<sup>36</sup>. Over the next two years it evolved into the SWMTEP 1984-89 document which was the first six-year plan for system-wide (i.e. UN-wide) coordination in the area of the environment.

As a result of the Governing Council's new biennial cycle, no regular session was held in 1988, however a four-day special session was convened, mostly in order to discuss system-wide planning and coordination of environmental affairs. The second SWMTEP covering the years 1990-95 was at the heart of the discussions and it was approved as submitted by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) in Decision SS.1/3<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> PrepCom I: Nairobi, August 1990; PrepCom II & III: Geneva, March & August 1991; PrepCom IV: New York, March/April 1992 (Rogers, 1993:32)

<sup>35</sup> Page 298, Agenda 21, Selected Chapters, Draft Version, *Environmental Policy and Law*, August 1992, Vol. 22/4.

<sup>36</sup> Report of the Governing Council on the work of its 9th session, 13-26 May, 1981, GA Supplement No. 25 (A/36/25), New York, UN 1981, 154 p.

<sup>37</sup> Report of the Governing Council on the work of its first special session, 14-18 March, 1988, GA Supplement No. 25 (A/43/25), New York, UN 22 p.

The goal and scope of SWMTEP 1990-95 is laid out at the end in its paragraph 407<sup>38</sup>:

The SWMTEP is intended to provide a coherent, overall framework; it is not a rigid prescription for action. Prepared, as it is, two years before the six-year period during which it will be in effect, it must allow for response to subsequent change, which will have to be expressed through the biennial programme budgets of the specialized agencies and of UNEP. It must therefore be a strategic rather than an operational document. Despite its high level of generality it reflects fundamental policies and priorities, and each agency, including UNEP, as the secretariat of the Environment Programme, must ensure that these common convictions are effectively translated into action programmes.

The introduction of the Programme stressed the interconnectedness of environmental parameters, the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach and the importance of the link between the environment and economic development. For reasons of practicality, however, most of the material is presented in a sectoral manner. UNEP was successful in applying nearly identical sector themes for SWMTEP and for its recent budgeting process; in view of the complexities involved in both areas this is no mean administrative feat. The synthetic analysis of UNEP's activities in the Annex follows the same structure.

Every sector or subsector of the SWMTEP is divided into following analytical divisions:

- a) Problems addressed
- b) General objective
- c) Specific objectives
- e) System-wide strategy
- f) Implementation of the strategy

The SWMTEP 1990-95 has a built-in review procedure. In paragraph 411 a mid-term evaluation of the Programme is scheduled for the 1993 Gov-

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<sup>38</sup>. The *United Nations System-Wide Medium-Term Environment Programme 1990-95*, Nairobi, UNEP, 103 p.

erning Council session which is supposed to reflect the outcome of the Rio Conference.

Interviews in cooperating UN agencies and bodies have shown, on the whole, that the reception given to the SWMTEP by most UN organizations was somewhat less than enthusiastic. Many UN officials involved in environmental matters either considered SWMTEP as a rather meaningless checklist or even didn't know anything about it. It is largely perceived as a UNEP document, and many people involved in joint programmes with UNEP or in environmental activities outside UNEP are not very keen on a general coordinating blueprint to guide their actions except in the most general terms.

The SWMTEP is probably the most ambitious of UNEP's four strategic initiatives because it has the most specific objectives. UNEP has a daunting task here: its coordinating effort has to overcome or at least mitigate the traditional turf-fights and the jealously guarded independence of the specialized agencies. UNEP's performance as an organization depends to some extent on the success of the SWMTEP. We will have to return to this point in the evaluation of UNEP's coordinating activities.

### 3.3. Theoretical Underpinnings of UNEP's Policy-Making Process

As we have seen in the above sections, UNEP has undergone significant change in the past few years. At the 1989 Governing Council its domain became more focused while at the same time a great effort was made to adjust its position in the North-South conflict to perceptions which have changed since the 1972 Stockholm Conference. Furthermore, at the 1991 Governing Council, the emphasis on *integrating* the environment into the economic development policies became much more explicit than ever before. Let us now interpret these changes in the light of theoretical concepts which are applicable to this process.

#### 3.3.1. The Evolution of UNEP's Domain

The theoretical analysis of UNEP's domain presents many difficulties which are specific to the UN context. One of the main problems here is that institutions, programs and projects set up by intergovernmental organizations are financed in ways which differ fundamentally from their domestic counterparts. They can be very autonomous like the specialized agencies, which raise their own funds. On the other end of the spectrum are organizations which depend entirely or largely on the UN secretariat. Still other UN organisms have a voluntary fund and trust funds. The former receives contributions from the member countries and is subject to the decisions of the governing body, whereas the latter tends to be dedicated by a single donor for a more or less

specific purpose. This is a feature which is particularly pronounced in the case of UNEP. This funding mechanism was purposely designed to give UNEP a high degree of autonomy vis-à-vis the UN secretariat. These are crucial determinants which make comparison with domestic organisms difficult.

Another problem is that coordinating units are normally small task-forces; that means there is no precedent to the study of a large organization of this kind. UNEP as a case study is unique in that it is probably the only organization in the world that has largely a facilitating mandate and has a budget of about US\$ 100 million per year. Unfortunately, most of the conceptual tools developed by theoreticians in organization theory and evaluation research have been tailored to domestic agencies, which have an implementing mandate, and which are analyzed in a 'micro' perspective that is very different from the 'macro' perspective employed here. As a consequence, one has to be very careful with the application of concepts which were developed for a political, organizational, and economic context that is totally different from UNEP's.

There are further complexities. In the evaluation research literature a distinction is made between more or less successful institutions in a certain sector. This distinction would be very difficult to apply here for two reasons. First, sectoral UN agencies can be compared with each other up to a point, but UNEP has enjoyed until now a certain monopoly on UN-wide environmental facilitating activities. As we shall see, this monopoly is increasingly being challenged, which creates a new competitive situation. Suffice it to say at this point, that the challengers are organizations of a quite different nature which don't challenge UNEP as an institution, but they do threaten to marginalize it in the larger decision-making process. What this means is that UNEP can't really be compared to a more or less "successful" sister organization such as say UNICEF. In any case what would "successful" mean here? Is it reflected in an increasing budget, in the services the organization renders to the UN, or is success expressed by the satisfaction of certain kinds of countries, or certain kinds of industries it advises (e.g. the chemical industry regarding dangers related to transportation and other aspects of dangerous chemicals)?

Even when these caveats have been taken into consideration, some general analytical concepts of the policy-making process remain relevant for the policy initiatives examined above. The most important one for UNEP is arguably the notion of the organizational *domain* which was introduced earlier. Some authors use the terms 'mission' or 'program' instead. Esman (1972:30) defines an organization's program as follows:

The organization's *program* is the set of activities it undertakes, the translation of doctrine into action. This involves a set of choices about

how the organization will apply the resources it has available and what stream of products or services it intends to provide.

Certain environmental issues have long been part of the domain of many specialized UN agencies, such as FAO, UNESCO and the International Maritime Organization (IMO). This is one of the most fundamental reasons why UNEP has had difficulties in clearly defining its organizational domain throughout its 20-year history. In fact, UN agencies - very much like their domestic counterparts - tend to defend their turf vigorously against new organizations with overlapping mandates. This obviously creates a problem for UNEP in defining its domain.

Another reason complicating UNEP's task of defining its domain is the fact that UNEP from the beginning was torn between two opposite forces: on one hand it was benefiting from what Esman (1972:30) calls a "felt need".

This felt need, i.e. the awareness of a need to address environmental problems which transcend national boundaries, emerged globally in the early 1970s and provided the impetus for UNEP's creation and evolution. At the same time, however, Esman points out with much pertinence for our organization that it had to build up support among its stakeholders in order to minimize opposition. In UNEP's case opposition came from UN agencies fearing an incursion into their territory and from governments fearing an infringement on their economic development plans.

This is a classic predicament in public administration. It happens very often that two or more programs or institutions *share* a certain *territory* comprised of their combined jurisdictions (Cabatoff, 1978:127). This means that they cooperate within certain parameters. An example here would be the problem of climate change on which UNEP cooperates with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). Each organization tends to defend its domain through a strategy which may or may not be expansionist. UNEP's "Stockholm Solution", as we have seen, was the negotiation of a totally unrealistic domain. UNEP was burdened with an excessively broad compromise mandate which included virtually everything remotely connected with the protection of the environment.

The fact that it managed, at the 1989 Governing Council, to focus and redefine its mandate along six priorities can be interpreted as an achievement of institutional maturity. As explained above, this new focus was made possible through a change in perceptions in both industrialized and developed countries. This new unanimity allowed the negotiation of a better defined *domain consensus* (Levin and White, 1960:594). This observation of *narrowing down* an organization's domain as it evolves is common in evaluation research (Cabatoff, 1981:155):

The process of organizational growth and development, to the extent that it implies increasing precision and clarification of goals, and a gradual 'exclusion' of theoretical possibilities inherent in the initial definition of goals, is thus inevitably a process of continuous and unsettling change, in spite of the young age of an organization.

This increasing precision and clarification of goals was possible thanks to a consensus among the Governing Council's member states about what UNEP should do. In 1972 this consensus was very weak; as a consequence UNEP required a very broad action plan to satisfy everybody. In 1989, with stronger support from both industrialized and developing countries, UNEP was finally able to shed some of the rhetorical goals such as human settlements, energy, trade, and technology transfer where it is not equipped to be effective. One may indeed generalize this phenomenon as follows: *the stronger the consensus about an organization's priorities is among its stakeholders, the more focused is the definition of its domain, and vice versa*. The UNCED process provided a fascinating illustration of this postulate: one of the objectives of the negotiations until the fourth and last preparatory conference in New York was the formulation of an 'Earth Charter' which was to state on one page in simple terms the key tenets of sustainable development. Unfortunately, the consensus which would have been necessary to arrive at a concise document of this sort was not present at Rio, and instead of the desired Earth Charter UNCED produced a longer Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, containing 27 principles of UN jargon<sup>39</sup>.

In 1989, as UNEP's domain was narrowing down, it was also expanded into areas which were not seen as priorities in 1972, namely ozone depletion, climate change, and transboundary transports of toxic wastes and chemicals. This expansion is the result of the fact that those issues are now worrying both the North and the South. What we are seeing is a classic case of an institution *adapting to changes in its environment*<sup>40</sup>. New scientific evidence regarding ozone depletion and stratospheric carbon dioxide accumulation have prompted global concerns over increased UV radiation and climate change. Furthermore, the Third World, especially Africa, became more and more a dumping ground for toxic wastes from the industrialized

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<sup>39</sup>. Page 268, *Environmental Policy and Law*, August 1972, Vol. 22/4.

<sup>40</sup>. It would be interesting to investigate *who* initiated these strategic changes: was it Dr. Tolba, UNEP's leadership, ACC, or a coalition of member countries? The theoretical interpretation of strategic change depends on the response to these and related research questions. Unfortunately, this "micro" perspective on the strategic decision-making process would go beyond the framework of this thesis, which focuses on the "macro" institutional issues. In other words, the focus here is put on the larger institutional *issues*, not on the *process* of organizational change.

countries. Concurrently, international shipments of toxic industrial chemicals multiplied in the absence of adequate information and guidelines about accidents, spills and health effects. These developments explain the expansion of UNEP's domain into those four additional priority areas.

The key policy ingredient in a stronger North-South consensus regarding UNEP is the sustainable development paradigm. In the wake of the publication of the 1987 report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Report), the sustainable development concept replaced the much weaker and more ambiguous term of 'ecodevelopment' which was promoted at the 1972 Stockholm Conference and which is "not susceptible to precise definition" (Caldwell, 1990:76). The main differences between the two notions are that the ecodevelopment concept lacked the emphasis on *integrating* environmental concerns from the very beginning into economic planning, and it arguably put less emphasis on issues of North-South equity than the sustainable development paradigm.

### 3.3.2. International Environmental Governance and Institution Building

After twenty years of existence, UNEP is now a very different institution from the 109-point Action Programme that was created at Stockholm. It has adapted its priorities to new scientific research and changes in popular and political perceptions. The changes outlined above show that UNEP's environment is composed not only of other UN organizations and government ministries but also of intangible phenomena such as scientific knowledge, public inclinations, or diplomatic compromises especially in the North-South dialogue. This adaption process is largely invisible. Its articulation in the Governing Council's Proceedings does bring it to light, but in reality it may have occurred much earlier. On the other hand, some decisions get implemented only much later or perhaps never. Philip Selznik (1957:12) in his classic sociological interpretation of organizational principles comments on adaptive change as follows:

Typically, institutional analysis sees legal or formal changes as recording and regularizing an evolution that has already been substantially completed informally.

As an organization evolves in a process which Selznik considers as a largely unplanned adaptation to external changes, it changes its nature from being an artificially engineered construction to becoming an 'institution'. Selznik defines this process of institutionalizing as "infusing with value" (p. 17), that is the organization becomes identified with the promotion of this value. In the case of UNEP one might consider its efforts at providing

scientific evidence of environmental degradation, or at convincing developing countries that the environment is not just a problem for the rich countries, as such fundamental values. Once an organization has been infused with value it is no longer expendable, it concentrates its resources on self-maintenance (p. 20) and on developing a coalition of supporting stakeholders. At the same time, for better or worse, it also becomes more resistant to change (p. 19).

As explained above, organizations in the UN context have many characteristics which need to be taken into consideration in the discussion of institution building. To start with, how does one define an international organization? Upon reviewing the international law literature, Virally (1981:51) concludes that there is no universally accepted definition of international organizations; nevertheless he provides a synthesis of definitions provided by a number of authors as follows:

An (international) organization can be defined as an association of States, established by agreement among its members and possessing a permanent system or set of organs, whose task it is to pursue objectives of common interest by means of cooperation among its members.

This definition highlights five specific characteristics of international organizations: their inter-State basis, their voluntaristic basis, their possession of a permanent system of organs, their autonomy and their cooperative function.

The Intergovernmental Organization (IGO) literature in general, and the international environmental affairs literature in particular, are giving increasing attention to a category of international institutions which are called '*regimes*'. Young (1989:13) defines these as

... specialized arrangements that pertain to well-defined activities, resources, or geographical areas and often involve only some subset of the members of international society.

Young (p. 236) stresses that regimes cannot be altered more or less at will by some of the member states and consequently they should be considered "important as independent variables". The term regime is quite vague and "susceptible to varied interpretation" (Soroos, 1986:17) in spite of the attention given to international regimes in the area of the environment over the last few years. Essentially, regimes deal with *international problem areas* which involve the implication of several organizations (p. 18).

UNEP is involved in a variety of environmental regimes which deal with problems such as the protection of the ozone layer, the transport of

toxic wastes, or the trade in endangered species which are discussed in Annex No. 10. Despite the 1989 streamlining of its domain, UNEP remains a tremendously complex organization involved in an exceptionally large number of issue areas. As a non-implementing, facilitating organization it necessarily has its resources spread wide rather than deep. The fact remains that its domain is still relatively vague compared with implementing agencies which have their resources concentrated in a specific sector. This somewhat fluid and pervasive character of UNEP's domain of course is intrinsic to the domain of environmental organizations at all levels. Baker (1989:40) surmises that this fluidity explains a confusing, constantly changing internal structure.

The task of building an intergovernmental organization that can effectively and efficiently fulfil this variety of demands is indeed an enormous organizational challenge. How is it possible to manage with very limited resources this caldron of competing requirements in a sectoralized organizational environment which is rather inappropriate for the protection of the global environment? Maurice Strong foresaw these managerial challenges already at the time of UNEP's creation and called for 'a drastically new concept of management' (Strong, 1973:703):

The environment cannot be sectoralized. It is a system of interacting relationships that extends through all sectors of activity, and to manage these relationships requires an integrative approach for which present structures were not designed. ... Lines of communications and decision-making must be given much greater horizontal and trans-sectoral dimensions than are provided for in existing structures. ... New patterns of organization in an era of societal management must be based on a multitude of centers of information and of energy and power, linked together within a system in which they can interact with each other.

More recently, this problem of trying to fit organizational structures and behavioral patterns to the complexities of the natural environment as well as to the traditions and patterns which shape the building of public institutions has received some further attention. The main problem, as Jacobs et al. (1986:27) point out is that our social frameworks are rooted in unidimensional thinking and in unidimensional structures whereas sustainable development requires new institutions and organizational capacities based on collaborative decision-making. In a similar vein, von Moltke (1988:87) notes that "the misfit between environmental phenomena and institutional arrangements to deal with them is a cause of much difficulty in institutions at all levels".

Has UNEP managed to live up to this challenge in institution building? At the organizational level there are absolutely no indications that UNEP was

successful in developing any of the innovative structures and practices called for above. On the contrary, interviews at the specialized agencies cooperating with UNEP have shown that it is caught up in bureaucratic red tape causing delays and frustration just like other UN organizations and public sector institutions in general.

On the other hand, UNEP has been notable over these twenty years for gaining legitimacy and respect for carrying out its educational, scientific and facilitating mandates, and many analysts have called for strengthening the financial support it obtains from governments (e.g. Plant, 1990:422). It furthermore managed to build coalitions in the community which is composed of its *actively involved stakeholders*, such as politicians, diplomats, national and UN civil servants, scientists, international lawyers, consultants, and increasingly certain NGOs. This rather vague kind of international community has recently become an important topic in the IGO literature, especially in the field of the environment. Peter M. Haas (1990:352) has attracted considerable attention with his promotion of the term 'epistemic community'. He defines it as follows (1992:3):

By our definition, what bonds members of an epistemic community is their shared belief or faith in the verity and the applicability of particular forms of knowledge or specific truths. Our notion of "epistemic community" somewhat resembles Fleck's notion of a "thought collective" - a sociological group with a common style of thinking. It also somewhat resembles Kuhn's broader sociological definition of a paradigm which is "an entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by members of a given community" and which governs "not a subject matter but a group of practitioners".

An epistemic community is focused on a specific field such as ozone depletion or toxic waste shipments. All epistemic communities which have a significant impact on an institution constitute together its constituency. This concept of the epistemic community has been applied in the explanation of international institution building in various sectors such as the GATT (Drake and Nicolaïdis, 1992) or in the international food aid regime (Hopkins, 1992). It is particularly pertinent in the case of UNEP.

Haas (1992b) has stressed the importance of the epistemic community in the example of the 1987 Montreal Protocol for the protection of the ozone layer; UNEP has had a decisive impact on these negotiations and is now operating the secretariat of this regime in conjunction with the World Bank and UNDP. Haas argues that it was the transnational epistemic community which managed to "directly influence" (p. 188) the DuPont corporation as the major producer of fluorochlorocarbons, and to overcome resistance in the

Reagan administration which opposed this international regulation "until the very last minute" (p. 188). Dr. Tolba's efforts are generally acknowledged to have been crucially important in the negotiations of the ozone treaty (e.g. Benedick, 1991:6), which shows that he managed to use the coalition consisting of this epistemic community in order to fulfil one of UNEP's most important objectives in the 1980s.

In his study of the Mediterranean Action Plan, the so-called 'Med Plan'(1990a), Haas described the importance of the work of a coalition consisting of scientists, municipal leaders, NGOs and parliamentary groups. It is interesting to note that Peter S. Thacher, a practitioner who was very much personally involved in these negotiations, and who was UNEP's deputy executive director from 1977-1983, explicitly confirms this interpretation and uses the term epistemic community in his own analysis of the Med Plan (1993:131).

This capacity to build coalitions and obtain their support in the realization of an organization's goals is one of the most important ingredients in any organization's strategy. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978:25), building on the classic writings of March and Simon (1958) go even further and consider coalition building "an organization's most critical activity" in order to ensure its survival. UNEP as a growing and evolving institution has arguably benefited from the emergence of epistemic communities in the numerous sectors of the international environment.

In conclusion, UNEP presents a fascinating and peculiar example of institution building because of its complex interlocking activities with the network of UN organizations and because of the crosssectoral nature of international environmental affairs. The institutionalization of an idea which was vague and extremely ambitious two decades ago has now reached maturity. With the retirement of Dr. Tolba, who has headed the organization for the last 16 out of its 20 years, one may indeed consider that the first phase of UNEP's evolution has now reached its end. As we shall see, the organization faces important challenges especially with regard to new competitors in the area of its coordinating mandate. Based on its history so far, one may predict that UNEP is quite capable and well placed to adapt to changes in its organizational environment.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE SECRETARIAT

In Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) the role of the secretariat differs from their national counterparts because their 'Board of Director', in UNEP's case the Governing Council, is composed of civil servants, diplomats and politicians delegated by the member countries. The secretariat not only has to carry out the policies of its legislative body, it has to prepare draft decisions and provide documentats for the regular meetings and for various negotiations. These need to be edited in such a way that after adoption by the Governing Council they can be submitted to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for approval, before they are submitted to the UN General Assembly's Second Committee. The latter deals officially with economic and financial matters<sup>41</sup>, the environment used to be tacked on to these but is gaining increasing importance. This means that in composing its documents the secretariat constantly has to keep in mind not only the Governing Council, whose members tend to come from Ministries of the Environment, but also the members of the Second Committee who tend to be much more economically inclined.

#### 4.1. The Role of the Secretariat

The creation of UNEP's secretariat, like the creation of its Governing Council, goes back to the General Assembly Resolution 2997 (XXVII) of December 15, 1972. The intention was to create a focal point for environmental action and coordination within the UN system, which should be administered by a "small" secretariat. A small secretariat should ensure, as the Resolution explains, "a high degree of effective management". The underlying assumption seems to be that a secretariat that is small by UN standards, i.e. in

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<sup>41</sup>. Page 16, *Everyone's United Nations - a Handbook on the Work of the United Nations*, New York, United Nations Publications, Tenth Edition, 1986, 484 p.

comparison with secretariats of agencies like UNESCO or FAO, will automatically be effective and efficient.

The real reason for this emphasis on a small secretariat, however, might very well be quite different. Quite simply, back in 1972, in view of the established UN agencies' misgivings toward this newcomer, (which was going to coordinate their environmental activities), a small and therefore less threatening secretariat was politically easier to realize than a large one.

It doesn't make much sense to assume, as this Resolution does, an automatic inverse relationship between size and effectiveness. One of the criticisms often expressed during interviews with UNESCO and FAO officials was, that the UNEP secretariat is not effective because it doesn't have enough competent professional staff. These complaints need to be accepted with a grain of salt, they may well be self-serving in defense of large secretariats at UNESCO and FAO. On the whole, however, it stands to reason that UNEP's effectiveness would be strengthened if it had for example more international lawyers and foresters, to name just two categories of professionals which were mentioned repeatedly.

As of December 31, 1991, UNEP's personnel was composed as follows<sup>42</sup>:

	Professionals	General Service	Total
Geneva	176	349	525
Nairobi	24	19	43
Lausanne	9	9	18
Paris	7	8	15
Athens	6	13	19
Montreal	5	4	9
New York	3	8	11
Total	252	439	691

(including several other locations with small staff numbers)

One thing that is particularly striking about the geographical distribution of UNEP's personnel is the fact, that only three out of 252 professionals - *about one percent* - are located in New York! This represents quantitative evidence of the very low priority its leadership gives to the importance of the New York liaison office. These three professionals are responsible not only for UNEP's public relations with North America (Governments and Permanent

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<sup>42</sup> P. 151, UNEP 1991 Annual Report, Nairobi, 1992, 213 p.

Missions, media, scientists, NGOs, public at large), but also with all UN bodies in New York. We shall see what the implications and consequences of this structural prioritizing are on UNEP's ability to fulfil its coordination mandate throughout the remainder of the thesis.

UNEP's personnel is paid through a combination of contributions from the regular UN budget, the Environment Fund, and other voluntary government contributions. The above figures apply to persons UNEP calls "on board". In addition to these, UNEP maintains dozens of budgeted but vacant positions, because the amounts and the timing of voluntary government contributions to the Environment Fund are difficult to predict. In fact, Dr. Tolba is generally credited with a prudent, disciplined financial management which has kept UNEP out of financial troubles.

In theory, the secretariat's task is to support the Governing Council and to execute its decisions. The secretariat's coordinating, catalyzing, planning and advisory activities, as well as the administration of the Environment Fund are supposed to be guided by the Governing Council. In practice, however, the executive director's role of bringing to the attention of the Governing Council future projects and general environmental matters gives the secretariat much more room to develop its own initiatives than one might expect.

As far as financing the secretariat is concerned, the Rules of Procedure of the Governing Council roughly stipulate that the support function with respect to the Governing Council is financed from the regular UN budget, whereas the administration of the Environment Fund and other programmes is borne by the Fund itself and other voluntary government contributions. This budget guideline also applies to personnel costs.

The 1989 Governing Council initiated, through Decision 15/1, that the Bureau of the Governing Council should become a permanent high-level liaison unit with other UN bodies on an experimental basis. This new unit resembles UNESCO's Executive Council, which has officially a supervisory role over the General Conference, UNESCO's legislative body. In reality, however, it is very much dependent on UNESCO's secretariat for pertinent information. Thus UNESCO's Executive Council has degenerated into a subsidiary 'appendix' of the secretariat (Holly, 1985:762). If this experience is of any pertinence for UNEP, its secretariat will not have to fear a great loss of autonomy from the institution of a permanent Governing Council Bureau.

Interviews at Nairobi Embassies have shown, that the meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives were usually dominated by the executive director, who tended to deliver monologues to the Committee, rather than seeking input from the government representatives. Furthermore, as mentioned above, Nairobi, is far less important as an international decision-making center than for instance New York or Geneva with their numerous Permanent Missions. This results in a lack of specialized staff members at the Embassies, who would be able to exert more influence on the

preparation of the Governing Council's documents and on its agenda. This situation increases the leverage of the secretariat over the Governing Council's delegations and strengthens its autonomy with respect to its member governments.

This observation is supported by an analysis of the secretariat's draft decisions and other preparatory documents which shows again and again, with few exceptions, that they are integrated into the 'Decisions' of the Governing Council. An example among countless others which may be cited is the draft of the modalities of the 1992 Conference on Environment and Development<sup>43</sup>, which became the five-page Decision No. 15/3<sup>44</sup> without any modification. An interesting detail in this case is the fact that the draft is dated May 23, 1989, i.e. eight days after the beginning of the Council Session and two days before the decision's adoption. This indicates that discussions among delegates did take place before the draft was submitted to the Council, which is an exception. It would be interesting to investigate in some detail to what extent changes to draft documents tend to emanate from negotiations among delegations, or from exchanges between delegations and the secretariat. In most cases the drafts are dated several weeks ahead of the begin of the session.

The preparation of the draft decisions allows the secretariat to influence the decision-making process very substantially. This important task is one of the opportunities given to UNEP's leadership to act proactively in the very dynamic and highly politicized institutional network in which it has to function. The same situation prevails at UNESCO: Holly (1985:787) observed that the decisions of its legislative body, the General Conference, tend to be adopted without vote by consensus. Disagreeing delegates usually voice their opposition during the debates but not through a vote. In the same vein, a press release at UNEP noted:

most decisions are accepted by consensus. For instance, at the 1989 Council Session all decisions except one regarding the environmental situation in the Israeli-occupied territories were adopted by consensus<sup>45</sup>.

In conclusion, IGO secretariats are more important than their official mandate might indicate. In general, the IGO literature tends to overlook or underestimate the autonomy and influence of the secretariat. Willetts (1988:35) puts IGO secretariats in the same group as INGOs and national liberation movements as a kind of actors in the UN system, which are not

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<sup>43</sup> 1992 UNCED, draft decision submitted by the Bureau, UNEP/GC/L.28, 23 May 1989, 5 p.

<sup>44</sup> Decisions adopted by the Governing Council at its 15th Session, Na. 89-3253 - 1544E, 93 p.

<sup>45</sup> UNEP Press Release 89/32, New York Liaison Office, 26 May 1989, 4 p.

member countries with a voting privilege, but nevertheless may influence the outcome of negotiations.

#### 4.2. The Tolba Era or the Importance of the Executive Head

In view of the fact that Dr. Tolba has headed UNEP from 1976-1992, it is no exaggeration to speak of the "Tolba Era". All persons interviewed considered him a 'hands on' manager, i.e. he was very much involved in all important decisions. He has probably shaped UNEP to an extent which is unparalleled in the UN system. Probably he has been able to dominate UNEP to such a high degree because it was still a relatively young organization.

Dr. Mostafa Kamal Tolba, born on December 8, 1922, in Zifta, Egypt, became UNEP's executive director, with the rank of a UN Under-Secretary-General, in 1976, after serving as deputy executive director for UNEP's first two years. In 1988 he was re-elected for his fourth four-year term. He did not come up through the UN ranks, having made his career as a scientist and administrator of scientific institutions. After obtaining a Ph.D. in plant pathology from Imperial College, London, in 1949, he taught microbiology in Cairo and Baghdad, and was appointed professor of microbiology at Cairo University in 1968. In the period of 1950-1973 he published nearly a hundred papers on plant disease, anti-fungal substances and the physiology of microorganisms. He also occupied various scientific positions and headed governmental bodies including a ministry in Egypt. In 1972 he headed the Egyptian delegation to the Stockholm Conference which subsequently led to his present position.

Opinions of professionals involved in international environmental affairs regarding Dr. Tolba's leadership vary considerably, as might be expected for such a political assignment. Interviews throughout the UN system as well as outside it have shown furthermore that these opinions are particularly polarized in his case due to his rather colorful personality on one hand, and on the other hand due to those persons' assessment of UNEP's organizational strategy, performance and even its fundamental mandate. In view of Dr. Tolba's profound involvement in all major facets of UNEP's activities, opinions about UNEP as an organization reflect to a large extent opinions about his leadership.

The executive director has considerable power over UNEP's selection of priorities. For instance, as long as he stays within the approved total budget amount, he has the authority to increase or decrease by 20% the share allocated by the Governing Council to each of the twelve programmes

of the Environment Fund<sup>46</sup>. A considerable latitude in the execution of the legislative body's decisions is not specific to UNEP, it reflects the power and autonomy of UN secretariats in general.

Present and former UNEP staff members questioned about Dr. Tolba's management style all considered that he is very "authoritarian". Some used words like "dictatorial" or "impulsive", although he appears to have calmed down over the last few years. An internal 1988 UNEP publication, which he must have seen before it went to print, quotes this revealing sentence from an interview with him: "When I shout at my staff," he says, "I expect them to think of me as their father"<sup>47</sup> ...

Another point of general consensus referred to Dr. Tolba's inability to delegate decision-making power. A refrain that came up often, was that many projects came to a standstill at the secretariat when he was on a trip, which happened frequently. Unnecessary delays occurred because his staff had to wait for his approval.

This top-down centralized management model is the very opposite of the one that his predecessor Maurice Strong (1973:703) had in mind, when he was developing his above-mentioned 'drastically new concept of management'. According to Strong, the essence of a management model which fits UNEP's advocating, coordinating and catalyzing mandate should be an emphasis on spreading communications and decision-making power horizontally.

On the other hand, at least one senior UNEP staff member praised the executive director for being easily accessible, non-bureaucratic and willing to bend procedures. He was also generally credited for being exceptionally well informed, knowledgeable and well prepared for meetings. He worked practically around the clock and in many ways could be considered to be a classical example of a hard-working, driven leader who runs very much "his own show".

Staff members in cooperating UN organizations often complained about a lack of feedback and slow communications. More significant, however, was the criticism from the same quarters about "stop-and-go" management due to indecision during Dr. Tolba's absence, and due to frequent priority shifts. This unpredictability and lack of consistency made it difficult for them to maintain a sustained effort in a joint program. Negative consequences were felt in Nairobi, too, when program leaders could not implement decisions and were frustrated in the fulfilment of their tasks. When these reproaches were mentioned in Nairobi, they were returned with

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<sup>46</sup> Page 92, Decisions adopted by the Governing Council at its 15th session, Na. 89-3253 - 1544E, 93 p.

<sup>47</sup> Page 3, UNEP Feature 88/2, "The Ombudsman of the Environment" (a feature for UNEP by Geneva-based journalist Paul Ress), Na. 88-2260, 4 p.

reciprocal complaints. For instance, UNEP sometimes doesn't even get a final copy of a joint publication. The "stop-and-go" management was defended with the need to reconcile unpredictable voluntary contributions to the Environment Fund with a balanced budget. That is not very convincing, however. These revenue fluctuations obviously do create serious managerial problems, but they are not the cause of a lack of strategic consistency.

Dr. Tolba got high marks, on the other hand, for his diplomatic skills. He has numerous personal contacts at the highest levels both in the North and the South. He was considered to be very influential in the environmental policy-making process in developing countries. He enjoys a reputation of being a very able and tough negotiator and got very wide credit for such diplomatic achievements as the 1987 Montreal Protocol on the Protection of the Ozone Layer or the 1989 Basel Convention on Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Waste. Ambassador Richard Benedick, the head of the American delegation at the Montreal Protocol negotiations, presents a very positive judgement of his diplomatic abilities:

The strong personality of its (UNEP's) executive director, Mostafa Tolba, an Egyptian scientist, was a driving force in achieving the eventual consensus. Rather than merely playing a mediating role between opposing sides, Tolba risked taking personal positions, advancing views and concerns that might otherwise have been overlooked and making UNEP in a sense the advocate for governments and populations not present at the negotiations. In sum, UNEP went far beyond a traditional secretariat function: it was a model for effective multilateral action (Benedick, 1991:6).

A critical issue is the fulfilment of UNEP's advocacy role as the United Nation's environmental conscience. Throughout the UN system and beyond it, Dr. Tolba is usually credited with defending the protection of the environment passionately, with great conviction and sincere dedication. He was generally given much credit for "putting UNEP on the map", and for being a very articulate and convincing advocate of nature and living things. Some environmentalists and development activists complain that he was too close to industry and Northern economic interests in general. On the other hand, he was also criticized by diplomats and civil servants in the North for being too aggressive, to the point of sometimes being undiplomatic and alienating Western governments in his environmental advocacy role. Perhaps the biggest challenge for UNEP's executive director is to find an appropriate balance in his or her delicate advocacy role between those widely conflicting demands. On the whole, it seems to me that it is Dr. Tolba's biggest achievement that he has indeed been successful in steering UNEP on a course which

reconciled its advocacy mandate with the numerous economic, political, diplomatic and institutional constraints which characterize its task environment.

In conclusion, it is possible that Dr. Tolba's patriarchal, centralized management style thwarted networking initiatives which are important in fulfilling UNEP's coordination and catalyzing mandate. On the other hand, his articulate and widely respected environmental advocacy has contributed significantly to an increasing world-wide awareness of environmental concerns. His diplomatic skills have been crucial in the achievement of agreements among governments with widely differing structures, attitudes, priorities and resources.

#### 4.3. UNEP's Budget

The biggest portion of UNEP's resources consists of the Environment Fund to which governments make voluntary contributions. UNEP makes biannual budget plans based on pledges which are often honored only after long delays. The resulting unpredictability, caused especially by the major donors, represents a major problem for UNEP's administrators and accountants. The remaining resources consist mainly of the regular budget which UNEP receives as an 'ECOSOC-related' Programme from the UN secretariat, of trust funds for specific purposes, and of so-called counterpart contributions from governments and NGOs for joint projects. The regular budget is supposed to pay for the support services which the secretariat furnishes to the Governing Council, as well as for its basic overhead, but it is always insufficient to cover these costs.

The Environment Fund is essentially divided into Fund programme activities and so-called Programme and Programme Support Costs (PPSC) that cover the fixed expenses of the programme activities. UNEP complains that it constantly has to divert funds from the PPSC destined for specific programme activities to general secretariat expenses, such as translations which are supposed to be covered by the UN regular budget. As a consequence, increasing portions of trust funds, which are provided by governments for specific purposes, have to be syphoned off in order to sustain the administrative infrastructure<sup>48</sup>.

A former senior UNEP official pointed out in an interview that UNEP is disadvantaged in this regard by its Nairobi location, because the budget discussions take place in New York, where the UN secretariat is in a better negotiating position. Indeed, in a programme as complex as this one with so many interdependent activities it is often difficult to determine which costs

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<sup>48</sup>. Page 149, *UNEP 1987 Annual Report of the Executive director*, Nairobi, 1988, 280 p.

should be considered as overhead, and which ones should be allocated to specific programmes.

UNEP's biannual budgeting process has always been very complicated and difficult to figure out because of underspending, forward balances and changing formats from year to year. It has lately become even more so because special funds outside the Environment Fund are becoming more and more important<sup>49</sup>.

For the 1988-1989 biennium, UNEP's available resources were composed as follows<sup>50</sup>:

- Regular Budget:	\$ 6.05 million
- Environment Fund:	68.73
- Trust Funds:	18.48
- Counterpart Contributions	5.95
 Total:	 99.21 (for 2 years)

In 1989, the Governing Council set itself a spectacular increase from \$70 million to \$150 million as the target for 1992-1993, with a potential additional appropriation of \$35 million which would increase the Environment Fund to \$185 million for the present biennium, to which the regular budget and the trust funds have to be added<sup>51</sup>. This represents an increase of over 250% compared with the 1989 allocation! *The realization of this budget means that UNEP has now reached a total annual budget of approximately \$100 million.*

#### 4.3.1. Trust Funds and Miscellaneous Sources of Revenue

In addition to the Environment Fund and the regular budget, UNEP administers two kinds of trust funds. General trust funds are established under the approval of the UN Secretary-General, whereas technical cooperation trust funds can be established by UNEP's executive director. In 1989 UNEP was in charge of 10 general trust funds and 15 technical cooperation trust funds<sup>52</sup>. The general trust funds are largely autonomous and controlled by the donors, mostly governments. These trust funds serve very different purposes such as environmental training, international agreements, the protection of regional seas, or the protection of endangered species.

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<sup>49</sup> Page 187, *1989 Annual Report of the Executive Director*, Nairobi, UNEP, 1990, 185 p.

<sup>50</sup> Page 187, *UNEP 1989 Annual Report*, *op. cit.*

<sup>51</sup> Page 90, #517, UNEP, Report of the Governing Council of the Work of its 15th Session, 15-26 May 1989, General Assembly 44th Session, Supplement No. 25(A/44/25).

<sup>52</sup> Management of trust funds, UNEP GC.15/10/Add. 4, 27 January 1989, 13 p.

Some trust funds are set up by governments for specific purposes, or in order to fill vacant positions with professionals they pay for. On the whole no less than 10% of all of UNEP's professional positions - the equivalent of \$1.2 million for 1989 - are financed through arrangements outside the Environment Fund and the regular budget<sup>53</sup>. Other funds are set up jointly by several donors for common activities such as supporting the Montreal Protocol on the Protection of the Ozone Layer, or the Basel Convention on Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes.

The UNEP Clearing-house unit constitutes a special kind of trust fund. It was established in 1982; an initial grant of \$1 million from the government of Sweden allowed to develop its basic functions. Essentially, it serves as a facilitator, broker, advisor and trustee between donors, mostly governments, and developing countries. In this function, the Clearing-house identifies projects and seeks to find donors to execute them, or it uses a credit-line opened by donors for purposes which are specified by the donor. The degree of UNEP's involvement varies greatly according to the donor's wish to control the project. UNEP's Annual Report usually contains a section on the Clearing-house with numerous details but no comprehensive financial information is given. Nevertheless, a separate document indicates that \$17 million have been mobilized between 1982-1987 for this fund<sup>54</sup>.

This amount, however, seems to be lower than expected. The 1989 Governing Council, in Decision 15/14 on the Clearing-house, expressed "concern that UNEP has not yet attracted sufficient additional resources to play a significant role..."<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, the Governing Council found that its multi-faceted capacities should be communicated to potential donors more effectively by "revising the terminology with regard to the Clearinghouse function in order to make it clearer and better understood." Norway has established a trust fund with the purpose of supporting the Clearing-house mechanism through consultants. They are supposed to elaborate strategies for dealing with serious environmental problems.

On the whole, the Clearing-house is one of UNEP's most promising units. It has probably the potential to generate much larger contributions for environmental purposes from the industrialized countries. The comments made by the 1989 Governing Council indicate that it will be given a higher priority in the future. The potential for additional funding through the Clearing-house has to be seen in the context of UNEP's role and reputation, it shows how important it is for its leadership to carefully take into consideration the opinions of the member countries, especially the big and the more generous industrialized countries. This is why UNEP's advocacy role is so sensitive: it

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<sup>53</sup> Additional Sources of Funding, UNEP/GC.15, 10/Add.5, 21 February 1989, 15 p.

<sup>54</sup> *Towards a Prosperous Planet*, UNEP's Clearing-house, UNEP, Nairobi, 1987.

<sup>55</sup> Page 137, Clearing-house, *op. cit.*

has to be a diplomatic compromise between the developing countries which have most of the votes, and the industrialized countries which provide most of the funds. The Clearing-house trust funds, since they are even more "voluntary" than the Environment Fund, are particularly sensitive to UNEP's general reputation.

Finally, additional sources of funding are constantly being investigated. In a preliminary study, two fundraising consultants from Europe and North America were engaged to advise UNEP as to how funds from private sources might be raised<sup>56</sup>. In view of the fact that foundations and corporations are constantly besieged by requests for worthy causes, it was concluded that a substantial effort by senior UNEP officials would be required in order to raise these contributions to a significant level.

Clearly, this field is highly competitive and such initiatives need to be undertaken very professionally. At this point, these and similar efforts are still at the explorative stage. The shining exception is a gift of computers worth \$6.5 million by IBM in 1988. It may serve as an indication of the potential for private donations. In view of the large amounts spent on communications, air fares, accommodations and conferences it is to be hoped that UNEP will manage to use the IBM donation as a catalyst in order to attract future contributions from large corporations. At the same time of course UNEP cannot be too aggressive in the pursuit of such donations because of potential conflicts of interests, which are a much greater concern for UNEP's than for humanitarian UN organs such as UNICEF or UNHCR because of the much more political nature of its mandate.

Another concept promoted by UNEP is the establishment of National Committees. The most important one is US/UNEP, formerly called Friends of UNEP, in Washington D.C. Since 1985 it has been publishing a newsletter which brings UNEP's activities to the attention of the American public. Its other main activities are lobbying the US Congress for UNEP, and UNEP-related networking in Washington D.C. which is certainly the world's capital of environmental INGOs. Other National Committees exist in Germany, Kenya, Czechoslovakia, France, Syria, and in the UK<sup>57</sup>.

Thanks to its catalyzing action, UNEP is reckoned to have generated four dollars in environmental projects for every dollar it has spent. At the same time it is sobering to consider that UNEP's expenditures represent the equivalent of what the world spends on arms in about 20 minutes<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>56</sup> Page 5, Additional Sources of Funding, *loc. cit.*

<sup>57</sup> Page 7, Additional Sources of Funding, *loc. cit.*

<sup>58</sup> UNEP Profile, by Mary Lean, Nairobi, 1987, 36 p.

#### 4.3.2. The Environment Fund as a Barometer of UNEP's Success as an Institution

The voluntary contributions to the Environment Fund were approximately \$30 million per year from 1977 to 1987 with only minor fluctuations during all those eleven years; including 'estimated contributions' they reached \$35 million in 1988 and \$40 million in 1989<sup>59</sup>. In 1989 the Governing Council member countries, as we have seen, set themselves the ambitious target of increasing the Environment Fund to \$185 million for the 1992-1993 biennium which was confirmed in 1991 through Decision 16/44; at the same time, however, the Governing Council "... notes with concern that although the overall contributions to the Environment Fund has increased, the number of countries contributing to the Fund has decreased, and calls upon all Governments that are not contributing to make every effort to do so"<sup>60</sup>.

Another problem is the distribution of funds between internal projects (including so-called Programme Activity Centers) and joint projects (i.e. projects executed jointly with cooperating agencies and supporting organizations outside the UN). The 1990-1991 Fund programme activities budget foresees 64% of joint projects and 36% of internal projects. UNEP has often been criticized by the specialized agencies for spending too much money on internal projects, and it intends to increase the portion spent on joint projects which would certainly be a step in the right direction in the implementation of its catalyzing mandate.

The Environment Fund activities of the present biennium are spread over following main programs:

1. Atmosphere
2. Water
3. Terrestrial ecosystems
4. Oceans
5. Lithosphere
6. Human settlements & environment
7. Human health and welfare
8. Energy, industry and transportation
9. Environmental assessment
10. Environmental management measures
11. Environmental awareness
12. Technical and regional cooperation

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<sup>59</sup> Page 188, UNEP 1989 Annual Report, *op. cit.*

<sup>60</sup> Pages 102-105 & p. 107, UNEP, Proceedings of the Governing Council at its 16th Session, UNEP/GC.16/27, 30 June 1991, 157 p.

A synopsis of each of these twelve programs and of their percentage funding during the 1992-93 biennium is presented in the Annex.

Since the United States is UNEP's biggest contributor it is worthwhile to take a look at the evolution of their annual contribution<sup>61</sup>:

1973	million \$	4.30
1974		8.20
1975		3.20
1976		7.50
1977		10.00
1978		10.00
1979		10.00
1980		10.00
1981		9.98
1982		7.84
1983		7.80
1984		9.80
1985		9.84
1986		8.61
1987		6.80
1988		7.84
1989		9.50
1990		12.00
1991		15.00
1992		17.19
1993		22.00 <sup>62</sup>

The reduction of funding during the Reagan Administration is most striking. As a matter of fact, Jim MacNeill (1991:18), in an interview with Steve Lerner, was quite explicit about the "absolute flip flop" regarding the Reagan Administration in international environmental policies and comments as follows on the US contributions to the UNEP budget:

Some administration official tried to cut US funding for UNEP to zero for a few years after 1981. There was a fight with Congress. The Administration would put in a request for zero funding, the Congress

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<sup>61</sup>. US/UNEP, US Committee for UNEP, 2013 Que St., NW Washington DC 20009, Spring 1992, Vol. VII/1.

<sup>62</sup>. 1993 Appropriation (Information from the US Committee for UNEP, Washington DC).

would bump it up, and then there would be a negotiation and compromise. But the compromise was always less and less.

The fluctuations in these contributions give an idea of UNEP's difficulties in reconciling long-term projects with a balanced budget. This dependence on fickle providers of funds illustrates the previous comments about the sensitivity of the advocacy role and general reputation of UNEP's leadership. UNEP can pride itself on having been relatively successful during the present recession:

Although UNEP received less than the \$20 million included in the original House bill, the FY92 figure represents one of only three program increases in the International Organization and Programs account; UNICEF and IAEA are the others<sup>63</sup>.

In conclusion, the Environment Fund as a barometer of UNEP's world-wide recognition and legitimacy is indicative of a political climate, which is favorable for its expansion and further development. UNEP has been successful in translating world-wide environmental concerns into increased support of its Environment Fund and trust funds even during the worst post-war recession. Thus, 20 years after its creation UNEP has become a vivid illustration of a theoretical observation made by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978:2) in their classical treatise *The External Control of Organizations - A Resource Dependence Perspective*:

The key to organizational survival is the ability to acquire and maintain resources. This problem would be simplified if organizations were in complete control of all the components necessary for their operation. However, no organization is completely self-contained. Organizations are embedded in an environment comprised of other organizations. They depend on those other organizations for the many resources they themselves require.

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<sup>63</sup>. US/UNEP, Spring 1992, *loc. cit.*

#### 4.4. UNEP's Coordination Mandate and its Nairobi Location

As mentioned in the discussion of UNEP's creation, the selection of the geographical location for UNEP's secretariat involved bitter political fights, so much so that at the 1972 Stockholm Conference the decision was postponed and left for the UN General Assembly. The attempt to use the Nairobi location as a signal to developing countries to emphasize the importance of the environment for their development was arguably a success. At the same time, the selection of a developing country as the site for a major UN secretariat, for the first (and still only) time, was obviously overdue. Independently of these considerations of international equity which can be addressed in many different ways, the Nairobi location needs to be analyzed in the light of the variety of UNEP's mandates which don't all have the same institutional needs.

There doesn't seem to be any literature on this important question, which means that one needs to build one's conclusions on the insight of well-informed observers and participants in the process of international environmental action. On the whole, one very simple conclusion emerged very quickly: Opinions regarding the impact of the venue of UNEP's secretariat on its effectiveness are divided, but most people who think that Nairobi is an impediment to UNEP's success consider that for political reasons nothing can be changed.

Dr. Tolba has fortified the UN General Assembly's institutional set-up by concentrating, to a very high degree, decision-making and control in Nairobi. One observer used the term 'bunker mentality' to describe this attitude. From a managerial standpoint, it is presumably easier to administer UNEP's various programs if decision-making is concentrated at a single location. This presumably facilitates an efficient financial control and an effective streamlining of policy implementation. For most of UNEP's functions a concentration of control in Nairobi can perhaps be considered an asset. One has to wonder, however, how the interdisciplinary character of environmental projects can be taken into consideration in this kind of a configuration. In fact, at a colloquium on global environmental problems a participant noted that "UNEP at first avoided the turf-building which plagues the UN system but has since succumbed to it, becoming sectoral, defensive, and a total perversion of how it started<sup>64</sup>". This statement is certainly exaggerated, but the concentration of environmental planning in Nairobi does *de facto* strengthen the perception that environmental activities constitute a specific sector. This perception of course conflicts with the basic concept underlying the sustainable development philosophy that the environment should be considered as a *dimension* of development and not a separate *sector* dealing with the restoration of damages.

The most important question here is to what extent this politically and managerially desirable concentration of power may be detrimental to UNEP's *coordinating mandate*. It is another question whether it should indeed have such a coordinating mandate - this issue is actually debated in some quarters, for instance at FAO, UNESCO, or UNDP, and we shall revert to it in a moment. The fact of the matter is, as things stand for the foreseeable future, that UNEP *does* have an official policy guidance and coordinating mandate, as was re-confirmed explicitly at the Rio

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<sup>64</sup>. Page 25, "Environmental Problems: A Global Security Threat", 24th UN of the Next Decade Conference 1989, The Stanley Foundation, Muscatine, Iowa.

Conference through section 38.21 of *Agenda 21*, the 700-page UNCED document which is a comprehensive policy document for global sustainable development:

...The Governing Council should within its mandate continue to play its role with regard to policy guidance and coordination in the field of the environment, taking into account the development perspective<sup>65</sup>.

A general observation on the nature of coordination in the UN context is in order here. In view of the independence which the specialized agencies enjoy thanks to their prerogative to raise their operating funds from their member-countries, and thanks to the fact that they are governing themselves through their own legislative bodies, coordination in the UN system doesn't have the same meaning as in most other organizational settings. Coordination traditionally implies at least in principle some sort of ruling powers. In public institutions this power is often quite vague and ineffective. Graham Allison, in his classic organizational study *Essence of Decision* (1971:145), considers that public sector institutions in a decentralized arrangement enjoy 'baronial discretion'.

At the UN, this discretion is particularly pronounced. Coordination can only be done through moral persuasion and voluntary cooperation. A coordinating mandate does not connote a decision-making or regulatory power as it usually does in industry or in national governments. It essentially implies instead information gathering and disseminating, and organizing negotiations over the implementation of mandates. In view of the cooperating agencies' autonomy, the difference between coordinating and cooperating can become quite blurred. Skilled coordinators of course will obtain some degree of influence from this function, but it is understood by all participants that this influence is rather limited. As we have seen in the case of SWMTEP, even if an organization has received its coordination mandate from the General Assembly, this fact does not necessarily give it a great deal of power in the execution of this mandate. If it distributes certain tasks to certain institutions, these institutions may well more or less ignore or exceed them, or they may otherwise interpret them according to their own preferences.

As far as UNEP is concerned, the first problem with its coordination mandate, of course, is the fact that Nairobi is really out of the way for people travelling to such UN locations as Paris, Geneva, Vienna or Rome which are all located within about one hour's flight from each other. From these locations, reaching Nairobi takes longer than a flight to New York. It happens frequently that ministers and senior UN and government officials visit several agencies on the same trip for interdisciplinary and interagency discussions, which is what environmental coordination is all about, but they can't include three additional days for talks in Nairobi. As a consequence, UNEP is often left 'out of the loop'. Telecommunications have long been a sour point, they have improved recently for the UN network, but it still remains to be seen if especially fax connections and telecommunications outside the UN system can be maintained at an adequate level.

Nairobi, unlike Geneva and New York, lacks a large number of Permanent Missions staffed with technically well informed staff. Instead, UNEP's direct link with the Embassies and High Commissions is constituted by the 'Committee of Permanent Representatives' whose members are generally not specialized in

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<sup>65</sup>. Page 298, *Environmental Policy and Law*, August 1992, Vol. 22/4, "Agenda 21 - Selected Chapters", pp. 271-300.

environmental matters and have to deal with many other issues at the same time. Furthermore, again due to the Nairobi location, they are in many cases not well connected with their governments' ministries, especially in the case of small countries. In fact, ambassadors of developing countries often represent several countries. These factors resulted in a committee which according to several observers is not very effective as a liaison mechanism between UNEP and its member states. Specialized international lawyers as well as some other professionals on the other hand often seem unwilling to live in Nairobi with the result that staffing can be a problem for UNEP.

Last but not least, I doubt that the Nairobi location really serves developing countries' interests. An official in a bilateral development agency concluded that the Nairobi location helped to marginalize UNEP and therefore makes it more difficult for its secretariat to defend the interests of the South. At the same time, it is absent in New York except for a very modest liaison office. Although it is assisted by an even smaller liaison office in Washington D.C., it is clearly understaffed for its role as a bridgehead in North America. The same can be said about the Geneva office and Europe. In order for UNEP to achieve more political weight, building up a stronger presence in Geneva and especially in New York is absolutely essential.

Nevertheless, on the whole, the Nairobi location has served UNEP reasonably well for the first twenty years. In any case, it would be politically unrealistic indeed to discuss any change in the location of the secretariat, not only would the approximately 50 African UN member states block any such move, they oppose any partial transfer of personnel even though the Latin American and many Asian countries might like to see a stronger UNEP presence in New York where they are represented better than anywhere else.

This doesn't mean, however, that the Nairobi issue is predetermined and carved in stone for ever. The substantial recent increase in UNEP's budget gives its leadership a considerable leeway, which it can use with regard to the Nairobi conundrum. It is certainly conceivable that UNEP could strike a deal with Kenya and the other African members whereby Nairobi would end up with an enlarged staff thanks to the larger budget, while at the same time those few positions and functions in the area of political, financial, technical and legal coordination, which suffer most from the Nairobi location, would be transferred to New York and Geneva.

The convergence of environmental and developmental concerns within the UN makes such a trend inevitable. There is simply no way that UNEP can play a major policy-making role in sustainable development from its Nairobi bunker! This institutional theater has recently become more complex by the addition of two new players: the first is the Global Environment Facility (GEF), a joint structure comprising the World Bank, UNDP and UNEP which will be discussed later, and the second is a high-level Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) comprised of the representatives of 53 states whose creation was decided at the Rio Conference. Like UNEP, it reports to ECOSOC. Many analysts (e.g. French, 1992:8) would have preferred a more autonomous stature which would have been achieved if CSD had been made to report directly to the General Assembly. Even though there may be a certain parallel here with UNEP's creation at the Stockholm Conference, it should be noted that the mandate as well as the organization of the Commission were less clearly defined at UNCED than UNEP's at Stockholm.

The mandate of this new Commission consists essentially in "*monitoring* the progress in the implementation of Agenda 21", including financial resources, technology transfer, the implementation of the conventions, and private-sector activ-

ities<sup>66</sup>. A special feature of the Commission is that it will seek input not only from the UN network, but also from non-UN sources such as "international financial institutions and other relevant intergovernmental organizations, including industry and the business and scientific communities"<sup>67</sup>. Of particular significance to UNEP is the fact that this Commission also has the mandate "to provide a high-level nerve-center that aids in the effort to *coordinate* (italics added) the UN's far-flung responses to the environment-and-development challenge posed at Rio" (French, 1992:8). This coordinating effort notably includes not only the World Bank but for the first time also the IMF, which so far has managed to isolate itself from environmental ramifications of its actions and policies.

The coordination mandate may go very far, for instance CSD is required to

... enhance international cooperation and rationalize the intergovernmental decision-making capacity for the integration of environment and development issues.<sup>68</sup>

This raises two separate issues. First of all, one can expect that the coordinating activities of UNEP's Governing Council and the CSD need to be coordinated which may cause some problems. Furthermore, UNCED has resuscitated, through Article 38.17 of Agenda 21<sup>69</sup>, a top-level taskforce on sustainable development of the Administrative Coordinating Committee (ACC) which consists of the agency and program heads or their deputies. This taskforce was first created in 1988 in Oslo at an ACC meeting convened by Mrs. Brundtland but never got off the ground because of inter-agency quarrels. This means that the UN now has three bodies which are officially mandated to coordinate environmental and sustainable development issues: UNEP, CSD, and ACC's taskforce. This doesn't seem to be the most effective setup - one has to wonder if anybody *does* coordinate all these coordinators.

Another factor complicating coordination at the UN is the fact that the tasks to be coordinated are highly varied. This is not unique or specific to the UN setting but in the case of UNEP the diversity of organizational domains to be coordinated is particularly awesome. Litwak and Hylton (1969:343) hypothesize that coordinating agencies will thrive in an interorganizational environment to the extent that the organizations to be coordinated are interdependent and have standardized tasks. Both conditions can hardly be considered as fulfilled in the case of the UN's specialized agencies which makes UNEP's coordinating task so onerous.

The principle underlying support for the specialized agencies' independence lies in the relative autonomy of the ministries which send their delegations to the agencies' legislative bodies, for instance the Ministry of Health in the case of the World Health Organization. Furthermore, the ministries' officials are in constant contact with their counterparts at the agencies which creates sectoral affinities which

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<sup>66</sup> Page 2, "Institutional arrangements to follow-up UNCED (draft resolution prepared by the issue-coordinator on the basis of A/C2/47/WGI/CRP.10 after informal consultations), November 25, 1992, 10 p., provided by the Center for Development of International Law, Washington DC. UNCED discussions at the GA's Second Committee's subgroup ended on November 25 which means that this draft will most likely be adopted by the GA without Significant changes.

<sup>67</sup> Page 220, *Environmental Policy and Law*, August 1992, Vol. 22/4.

<sup>68</sup> Page 1, Institutional arrangements to follow-up UNCED, November 25, 1992, *loc. cit.* (Additional coordination details are spelled out on page 7).

<sup>69</sup> Page 297, *Environmental Policy and Law*, August 1992, Vol. 22/4.

may easily be stronger than superimposed coordination efforts. Wherever bureaucratic authority is scattered, Allison's model of 'Governmental Politics' tends to be manifest (p.144):

The 'leaders' who sit on top of organizations are not a monolithic group. Rather, each individual in this group is, in his own right, a player in a central, competitive game. The name of the game is politics: bargaining along regularized circuits among players positioned hierarchically within the government.

... the Governmental (or Bureaucratic) Politics model sees no unitary actor but rather many actors as players - players who focus not on a single strategic issue but on many diverse intra-national problems as well.

In the light of this baronial autonomy of the agency heads it stands to reason that there is a fundamental trade-off to be made between *monitoring* UN agencies (let alone "policing" them) and *coordinating* their activities with sister organizations: no organization is going to be particularly cooperative with a coordinating authority if it knows that the latter may at any time turn against it and blame it for some environmental misdeeds. This means that by burdening CSD with important coordinating functions its creators have consciously reduced its potential for an effective monitoring role. That applies to monitoring both UN agencies and governments because delinquent governments are members of the agencies. They usually participate in negotiating coalitions where they can exert political pressures at the agencies' governing boards to defend themselves against blame for lack of environmental compliance.

The only way to reduce the political trade-offs between monitoring and coordination would be to give these two tasks to two completely separate organizations. Clearly, the international community is not ready yet for the creation of an effective monitoring body with some teeth, in fact some countries, e.g. the U.K., agreed only reluctantly at or after the last preparatory conference to the establishment of CSD. In the light of this resistance to environmental monitoring, the creation of CSD represents a significant progress over the status quo.

There was probably no alternative at this time to combining the monitoring and coordinating tasks in this new Commission. From the start of the UNCED process it has been clear that there is a general reluctance among politicians, diplomats and civil servants working in the UN arena about creating new institutions. Rather, one tends to try to strengthen existing structures and adapt them to new tasks. Until a few years ago an opposite trend was prevailing: when there was sufficient support for a new task, a new organization would be created. There is a wide-spread feeling now, however, that as a result of this tendency the UN is burdened with a proliferation of organizations and programs and one hesitates therefore to add new ones. Monitoring and coordinating functions in sustainable development need to be placed also in this context which makes the establishment of separate bodies obviously more difficult.

Consequently, the establishment of one new commission was from the beginning the most ambitious goal that had any chance of being realized in UNCED's political climate. Furthermore, as Sand (1990:33) has shown in the case of the International Labor Organization, the UN hardly ever uses adversarial procedures to enforce compliance by member countries. He considers annual or bi-annual reporting by the member-states complemented by expert evaluation and public debate as more effective.

Nevertheless, one should hope that the movement favoring the establishment of a more autonomous and effective sustainable development monitoring agency will gain momentum. CSD's monitoring function should be strengthened while its coordination task should be alleviated. CSD should limit its coordination activities to general policy issues and to backing up a revitalization of UNEP's coordinating mandate, for instance by giving SWMTEP a higher profile and respectability. Coordinating sustainable development at the UN can only be effective if there is a clearly expressed *delineation of levels of coordination*: the ACC task force should set the basic parameters, CSC should develop general policy guidelines, and UNEP should negotiate detailed arrangements with the agencies based on SWMTEP.

As far as UNEP is concerned, which has no real mandate to monitor states or sister organizations, this fledgling organism represents the first explicit institutional challenge to its present monopoly on environmental coordination! It should be noted in this context that the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) proposed in its 1987 'Brundtland Report' *Our Common Future*<sup>70</sup> that the role of the Secretary-General in the coordination of UN-wide sustainable development activities should be strengthened beyond the very weak influence he presently has via ECOSOC. The report stipulated (p. 318):

To help launch and guide the interagency coordination and cooperation that will be needed, the UN Secretary-General should constitute under his chairmanship a special UN Board for Sustainable Development. The principal function of the Board would be to agree on combined tasks to be undertaken by the agencies to deal effectively with the many critical issues of sustainable development that cut across agency and national boundaries.

This is not a coincidence. Jim MacNeill, the principal author of the WCED Report, published, with two co-authors, a set of recommendations just a year before the Rio Conference, and he was very much involved in political and institutional issues throughout the UNCED process. *Beyond Interdependence* contains a set of recommendations which come very close to the design of the Commission on Sustainable Development as it was accepted at UNCED (MacNeill, Winsemius and Yakushiji, 1991:124). They see a need for this body to "provide leadership, overall political direction, and broad coordination", particularly for the Convention on Climate Change.

MacNeill (1992:34) considers that CSD has a great potential in becoming the "primary forum for international leadership, North-South dialogue and action on the road from Rio", as long as it "doesn't simply disappear in the huge, amorphous sponge that is the UN system". He calls not only for ministerial-level government participation and a strong secretariat, but also for the inclusion of women's groups, other NGOs, indigenous peoples, as well as the business community. MacNeill warns, however, that several important countries as well as some UN agencies concerned about losing some of their autonomy are trying to diminish the Commission's potential influence by pushing for a weak secretariat which would be integrated into another UN body.

Clearly, these initiatives show a considerable amount of dissatisfaction with the principle of UN-wide coordination from Nairobi. Perhaps the main reason why

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<sup>70</sup>. *Our Common Future* - The World Commission on Environment and Development, New York, Oxford University Press, 1988, 400 p.

coordination from Nairobi was largely seen as quite adequate until recently, is the fact that environmental issues were simply not considered of major political importance. At the same time, UNEP has never been really taken seriously by the specialized agencies, whose decision-makers were presumably quite satisfied to see its secretariat at a safe distance. There it is less threatening to their autonomy than a powerful presence in New York or Geneva. Now however, with the growing awareness of global environmental problems and the fear of millions of environmental refugees, perceptions of the fundamental design of the UN system are beginning to change. *It is in this context that the Nairobi venue of UNEP's coordination role has to be reconsidered.*

It is perhaps unavoidable that Dr. Tolba spent much of his time travelling. In fact, in the view of one government official, the proposals of the secretariat at the Governing Council depended for their political legitimacy to a large extent on his personal contacts with government leaders. Furthermore, interviews have shown that even now coordination does in reality occur in New York and Geneva. This means, unfortunately, that UNEP pays a heavy price for its geographical isolation in the area of coordination in terms of travelling of UNEP's top officials, cost inefficiencies, and a general lack of effectiveness. One can go a step further and observe that coordination from Nairobi is nothing but a fiction maintained for real or perceived political realism...

If UNEP maintains its coordinating function in Nairobi, the UN system will simply develop other environmental coordination mechanisms closer to the action, especially at the political level in New York, and *UNEP will be marginalized in the areas of policy-making and coordination.* The executive director of UNEP has also the rank of a UN Under-Secretary-General, but he is not very much involved in activities which reflect this very senior position with UN-wide responsibilities. The US Department of State seems to push in precisely this direction<sup>71</sup>:

An inversion of the current arrangement seems to be in order. The UNEP executive director should more explicitly exercise the function of a UN Under-Secretary-General, principally by heading a new, centralized environmental program coordinating body, as originally envisioned in Resolution 2997. *It should be based in New York* (italics added) and be made up of senior representatives from every UN entity with substantial environmentally related activities.

While New York is the UN's political center, Geneva is the hub of technical cooperation which is particularly important in the case of the environment due to its inherently interdisciplinary nature. Some diplomats considered in interviews that there is clearly a trend in the UN secretariat's decision-making process to concentrate more and more political and economic control in New York at the expense of the Geneva facilities. This goes hand in hand with an upgrading of UNDP's influence at the expense of the specialized agencies. Instead of automatically using UN Agencies such as FAO or UNESCO to execute UNDP-financed projects, UNDP will increasingly give NGOs and private consultants a chance to compete against them. This of course indicates a further concentration of financial and political power in New York and provides further backing for the argument of transferring UNEP's coordination activities to the East River and to the Lake of Geneva.

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<sup>71</sup>. Page 2, undated (presumably 1991) and unsigned memo by the US Department of State, 14 p.

Probably the majority of the developing countries, including China, are resisting any attempts to transfer activities out of Nairobi. From June 14-19, 1991, China hosted a ministerial-level Conference of Developing Countries on Environment and Development in Beijing, which was attended by 41 countries. They issued the 'Beijing Declaration' which contains following paragraph:

We support the strengthening of UNEP and all its programme activity centers in Nairobi, considering the success the Programme has achieved to date *from this venue* and the need to have it better equipped for carrying out its work<sup>72</sup> (italics added).

Unfortunately for this view, even under the best institutional constellation, UNEP will be more and more pushed to defend the need of its role in environmental coordination. Some people argue that UNEP should essentially have not much more than a scientific environmental support function, whereas for coordination and catalyzing UNDP would be more effective since it has a budget of \$1.3 billion<sup>73</sup> which would go a long way to induce the specialized agencies to accept its coordinating schemes. That would presumably not be accepted by the World Bank, however, which would mean that the two institutions would share coordination either through GEF or through a new joint structure.

The developing countries would be the losers in any such scenario. The Rio Conference has clearly shown that they vigorously resisted - without success so far - the interim financing of the conventions on biodiversity and climate change through GEF because they have far less influence there, especially at the World Bank, than the industrial countries. Furthermore, as we shall see, multilateral development banks are gaining ground at the expense of the specialized agencies<sup>74</sup>. For all these reasons, one may very well deduce that the resistance of the developing countries against a transfer of UNEP's coordinating function out of Nairobi will turn out to be ultimately counter-productive for their own interests. It is also counter-productive for the ideal of sustainable development because UNEP has more of a long-range orientation than both the World Bank and UNDP.

In this budding institutional repositioning a strengthening of UNEP's presence in New York becomes ever more important. Whatever the implications of such a trend may be, just about everybody interviewed outside Nairobi concurred with the notion that by definition, coordination must be done in a central location. UNEP is starting to see the signs on the wall and it appears very worried and defensive. It is digging in rather than acting proactively. At the 1991 Governing Council Decision 16/1 was passed which

... supports the strengthening of the headquarters of UNEP and the retaining of the programme activity centers already located there...

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<sup>72</sup> Page SF1, *Brundtland Bulletin*, September 1991, Issue 13, Center for Our Common Future, Geneva.

<sup>73</sup> Page 101, *United Nations Handbook 1991*, Ministry of External Relations and Trade, Wellington, New Zealand, 201 p.

<sup>74</sup> *The United Nations in Development - Reform Issues in the Economic and Social Field*, Final Report by the Nordic UN Project, Stockholm, Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1991, 111 p. cf. Ch. 5.1.2. The UN Agencies are losing ground, pp. 70-73.

... decides that future major extensions to the physical or other infrastructure of the Programme, particularly those with global functions, be centered principally in Nairobi;

...requests the Executive Director to inform all States of offers from Governments of major new facilities to be sited outside Nairobi and to seek comments for his guidance<sup>75</sup>.

A final issue in the context of coordination is the twenty year old question whether UNEP should be converted into a specialized UN agency like UNIDO. The basic issue here is again UNEP's relation with its cooperating agencies. The argument in favor of such a conversion is that UNEP would obtain more money to execute its own environmental projects rather than being essentially limited to catalyze such projects in conjunction with other bodies. That way, it is argued by some, UNEP would have more clout and it would be better able to serve the cause of the environment. The World Federalist Movement (WFM), or at least a group of its Norwegian members, promote this point of view<sup>76</sup>. The main problem with this perspective is that it would be very difficult to reconcile it with UNEP's coordination mandate, since the specialized agencies would then become sister organizations competing against UNEP for the same funds, whereas now, as an ECOSOC-related Programme, UNEP is part of the central United Nations Organization. As such it has a far greater legitimacy to coordinate the environmental activities of the specialized agencies. This is presumably why these proposals by the WFM and a coalition of six leading American environmental groups "have not found much support for this idea from the official delegates" (French, 1992:32).

On a more theoretical level, Thushman and Scanlan (1981) have investigated conditions which facilitate interorganizational boundary spanning - an activity which is of crucial importance for any coordination activity. They have found that individuals who excel in communicating across organizational boundaries need two different sets of qualities: they have to be very competent in the technical field of their organization, and they have to be very well-connected with the organization's task environment. At the same time, they found that two thirds of the boundary spanners investigated were professionals who are not in senior positions (p. 300). At UNEP there is a problem in this regard: interviewees have complained that the professional staff in Nairobi tends to be uninformed about political developments in Geneva and New York, and that information boundary spanning was not encouraged by UNEP's leadership which reinforces the feeling of isolation of UNEP's staff.

It should be re-emphasized that the Nairobi venue is not considered here as a hindrance in the execution of most of UNEP's activities. Thanks to UNEP's enlarged budget an expansion of its staff and of its activities in Nairobi can certainly be reconciled with the very limited transfers to New York and Geneva which were advocated above. These refer strictly to UNEP's coordination function and do not apply to its educational, scientific and catalyzing mandates. It should be pointed out in this context that the US Department of State has gone further and recommended that UNEP's principal environmental information services (collectively known as the 'Earthwatch program') should be transferred to Geneva where the International

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<sup>75</sup> Page 49, Proceedings of the Governing Council at its 16th session, UNEP/GC.16/27, 30 June 1991, 157 p.

<sup>76</sup> Page 2, *Proposal for a General UN System for Protection of the Environment* by a Commission of Experts, World Federalist Movement, En Verden, Oslo, 1991, 56 p.

Register for Potentially Toxic Chemicals (IRPTC), an important UNEP unit monitoring toxic chemicals, is already located<sup>77</sup>. There is no question, one of the greatest challenges for UNEP's new executive director will be a revitalization of its coordinating mandate. If the very limited decentralization recommended here is not implemented, UNEP will lose further weaken its coordinating function.

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<sup>77</sup>. Page 2, memo by US Department of State, *loc. cit.*

## CHAPTER 5

### UNEP AND ITS INSTITUTIONAL NETWORK

In order to understand the external constraints which are imposed on UNEP by the characteristics of the United Nations, it is necessary to take a look at the UN as a whole. We shall do so by analyzing some of the structural characteristics and problems of the UN which have an impact on UNEP. We then narrow down the focus to investigate how the UN functions as a vast network through specific coordination mechanisms.

#### 5.1. The UN System in the 1990s

##### 5.1.1. To What Extent is the UN System Really a System?

The total ensemble of the specialized agencies, the principal organs of the United Nations, its other organs and its autonomous organizations are traditionally called 'the United Nations System'. The UN's Department of Public Information uses this term<sup>78</sup>. Bertrand (1988:218) has this to say about the notion of the UN System:

The term 'United Nation System' has two different meanings: the first designating all the organizations, including the 'financial' organizations represented in the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), which brings together the heads of the agencies under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General of the United Nations; the second designating only the non-financial organizations.

Some authors use the term 'UN family' when they include the financial organizations. In this thesis, however, the use of the term UN System *includes* the financial organizations, because they work closely with the specialized agencies. The World Bank for instance has special cooperative agreements with four of them (FAO, UNESCO, WHO and UNIDO)<sup>79</sup>.

In reality, however, many of the "system's" components, especially the specialized agencies, enjoy a very high degree of autonomy. Not surprisingly

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<sup>78</sup>. *Basic Facts about the United Nations*, New York, UN Department of Public Information, 1980, 131

<sup>79</sup>. Page 412, *Everyone's United Nations, a Handbook on the Work of the United Nations*, Tenth Edition, New York, 1986, 484 p.

perhaps, officials at the UN secretariat tend to complain that the specialized agencies are too independent. They are financially autonomous thanks to their own legislative bodies, which determine the financial contributions of the member states and make budgetary and policy decisions. The delegations are usually composed of officials from the member states' corresponding Ministries or Agencies, e.g. from the Ministry of Agriculture in the case of FAO, or the Ministry of Public Health in the case of the WHO.

Baehr and Gordenker (1984:31) speak of independent fiefdoms, and they consider that "some competition has deliberately been built into the system". Finkelstein (1984:xiii) goes a step further and concludes, that the main source of friction in the UN system originates from disagreements among the agencies and the UN secretariat over the legitimacy of authority in specific areas. The decision-making process of the UN General Assembly is very complicated. Its delegations receive recommendations for approval in plenary meetings from seven 'Main Committees', i.e. the Special Political Committee and the six functional committees which are numbered First to Sixth<sup>80</sup>. Each member state has the right to be represented on each of these seven committees.

To complicate matters further, all decision-making processes are fundamentally constrained by the principle of 'sovereign equality' (Bennet, 1991:54) of its members. Furthermore, member states tend to view international problems through the lenses of geography, history, political systems or religion. Unfortunately, a nationalistic or otherwise narrow focus is particularly inappropriate when dealing with transboundary environmental problems. This is clearly one of the United Nations's most daunting challenges. In the light of above-mentioned obstacles, it is interesting to note that the management of biospheric concerns was given high marks recently at an independent, mostly academic colloquium on UN policy issues<sup>81</sup>.

At the bilateral and regional level, the question arises to what extent transboundary pollution of water and air constitutes a foreign infringement upon the right of a sovereign state to use the natural resources within its own territory. Soroos (1986:305) considers that "The sovereign rights of the countries on the receiving end of transboundary pollution would appear to take precedence". UNEP is involved in these kinds of issues for instance in the case of the Zambesi River which cuts across eight countries. Finkelstein (1988:30) observes a trend "away from the decentralized system of respect for sovereignty and toward a more centralized system of decision that in some respects approaches being international governance." At the same time, however, he warns that there is also a countermovement which may become more vigorous in the near future.

MacNeill et al. (1991:123) predict that the erosion of national sovereignty will accelerate as a result of increasing international interdependence from an economic as well as from an environmental standpoint, and they consider the traditional concept of national sovereignty as obsolete (p. 127), in need of a profound rethinking. It is in this context that a somewhat eclectic group of about twenty heads of government from both developing and industrialized countries (but without the US and USSR) met on the initiative of the French, Norwegian and Dutch governments at The Hague, Netherlands, in March 1989. They issued the 'Declaration of The

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<sup>80</sup>. *Everyone's United Nations - a Handbook on the Work of the United Nations*, Tenth Edition, New York, UN, Department of Public Information, 1986, 484 p.

<sup>81</sup>. *The United Nations and the Future of Internationalism*, Chatham, Massachusetts, The Stanley Foundation, 1987, 32 p.

Hague' calling for a *new institutional authority*<sup>82</sup>, which should be created either by strengthening existing institutions, such as UNEP, or by establishing a new one.

This concern over the reconciliation between national sovereignty, and the need for a supranational approach to global problems brought political leaders from all over the world together in Stockholm in April 1991. They launched the 'Stockholm Initiative on Global Security and Governance' which called for a review of the institutions set up to deal with global environmental and economic problems, and with global interdependence in the widest sense. This meeting resulted in a very ambitious enterprise called the *Independent Commission on Global Cooperation and Governance*, chaired by the former Swedish Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson and former Commonwealth Secretary-General Shridath Ramphal from Guyana, which met for the first time in Geneva on September 25-27, 1992. This new Commission will build on the work of the Brandt Commission on development, the Palme Commission on disarmament, the Brundtland Commission, as well as on the South Commission led by Julius Nyerere. It endeavors to conclude a report in early 1994, which should inform and catalyze UN reform negotiations during its 50th anniversary year in 1995<sup>83</sup>.

Clearly, with the present concept of national sovereignty, the UN "system" is of a very loose nature and consequently the term *network* is perhaps more appropriate. As far as UNEP is concerned, the network concept is particularly useful because even with its mandate to act as the focal point for environmental matters within the United Nations it reaches often beyond the UN in its daily activities.

Outside the UN, UNEP cooperates with nongovernmental organizations, industries, universities, and with the media. In official UN parlance, UN bodies are called 'cooperating agencies', all others organisms are called 'supporting organizations'. In 1990, 86 out of 206 UNEP projects were implemented by these supporting organizations<sup>84</sup>. In 1988, these supporting organizations accounted for approximately 30% of UNEP's ongoing project commitments, which represented then US\$ 9 million, whereas cooperating agencies accounted only for about half as much<sup>85</sup>. In interviews throughout the UN system as well as outside it, UNEP was often credited for achieving a great deal in consideration of its relatively modest yearly budget. The importance of its cooperation with NGOs contributes to this favorable reputation, because these organizations tend to be more efficient, since they don't have the political constraints of UN bodies.

About fifty of these intergovernmental organizations enjoy official observer status with the Governing Council. They are always listed in the Report of the Governing Council. There are many more other organizations which 'support' UNEP. At the Governing Council, however, usually just about a dozen of the officially accredited organizations send an observer, for instance OECD, the Council of Europe, EC, OAU, OAS, the Arab League, ASEAN etc. UNEP's Annual Report briefly summarizes every year the joint activities with the main cooperating agencies and supporting organizations.

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<sup>82</sup>. Text of the 'Declaration of The Hague', ECOSOC A/44/340 - E/1089/120, 22 June 1989, 5 p.

<sup>83</sup>. Page 5, *The Independent Sectors' Network*, (The Center for Our Common Future, Geneva), Number 20, October 1992.

<sup>84</sup>. Page 8, UNEP 1990 Annual Report of the Executive Director, Nairobi, 1991, 129 p.

<sup>85</sup>. Page 9, UNEP - *1988 Annual Report of the Executive Director*, Nairobi, UNEP, 1989, 102 p. It should be noted that the Annual Reports are not consistent in their format; furthermore, odd years contain more budgetary information than even years.

### 5.1.2. Structural Problems of the United Nations

Money has long been a serious and chronic problem for the UN. Financial difficulties began in the 1960s when certain countries such as the Soviet Union, France or several Arab countries refused to contribute to the peace keeping operations. The lack of funds and the delays in contributions continues to be one of the UN's most painful predicaments. At present we are witnessing a particular challenge to the UN due to the combined pressures of wide-spread international economic problems, on one hand, and a cumulation of new and renewed demands not only with regards to sustainable development but also in areas such as peace keeping, children's welfare and refugees. Renner (1992:31) talks of "empty pocket, full slate". He cites a comment made by former Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar before he left office at the end of 1991:

It's a great irony that the UN is on the brink of insolvency at the very time the world community has entrusted the organization with new and unprecedented responsibilities.

The present funding mechanisms of the UN based on assessed budgets and voluntary contributions to a large number of different kinds of funds are very inadequate and suffer chronically from arrears in payments. Various schemes of new "automatic" financing have been proposed. They could be based on international fees levied on the sale or on the consumption of weaponry, telecommunications, fossil fuels, or perhaps in the future on deep sea-bed mining (Kaufmann, Leurdijk and Schrijver, 1991:142). In an attempt to make the UN more efficient, the new Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has taken vigorous measures after just four months in office to start a streamlining process of the secretariat's administrative structure (Lewis, 1992). In a first phase, he has created in the spring of 1992 a new, powerful Under-Secretary-General for economic and social matters through the merger of several offices.<sup>86</sup>

An important structural problem for the UN is the inflated number of small member-countries which includes for instance several Pacific and Caribbean islands, with a population of not even 200,000! It is not difficult to understand that the powerful as well as the populous nations find it difficult to accept that they have to share an equal voting right with them. On the other hand, there are seven developing countries with populations of over 100 million<sup>87</sup>, which together represent approxi-

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<sup>86</sup>. Page 133, *Environmental Policy and Law*, June, 1992, Vol. 22/3.

<sup>87</sup>. Population of the eight largest developing countries (*L'état du monde*, Montréal, éd. du Boréal, 1992, 636 p.):

1. China	1139 million
2. India	827
3. Indonesia	184
4. Brazil	150
5. Pakistan	123
6. Bangladesh	116
7. Nigeria	108
8. Mexico	89
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Total	2736

mately half the world's population. Except for China, which has a permanent seat at the Security Council, these countries' influence on United Nations affairs is quite unrelated to their demographic importance. The system of one country - one vote is a nice democratic fabrication, but it does great injustice to the majority of the people on this earth. There has to be a better way of managing this global arena!

It is also quite clear that any council of close to 200 members like the General Assembly or its seven Main Committees is far too large to take effective resolutions in an efficient way. This explains largely why UN resolutions are often so meaningless, long-winded and repetitive: they represent the smallest common denominator that all member states could agree upon.

Even the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), to which UNEP's Governing Council reports, has grown too large for effective decision-making. Its mandate is to coordinate, under the authority of the General Assembly, the economic and social work of the UN and its specialized agencies. Originally it had 18 members. Its membership was increased to 27 in 1965 and then to 54 in 1973<sup>88</sup>. This large membership carries a political price: Maurice Bertrand (1985), a well-known and respected UN analyst and critic<sup>89</sup>, blames this increase in membership for pushing the major countries outside the UN system when they want to negotiate seriously. Not surprisingly then, interviews in Nairobi have shown that ECOSOC has hardly any practical pertinence for UNEP. The Report of the Governing Council is usually passed on to the General Assembly by ECOSOC without significant input or comment. Bertrand (1988:213) believes that the poor countries have made a big mistake by assuming that their large membership would give them real clout:

The problem is indeed the following:

that the majority enjoyed in the United Nations by the countries of the Group of 77 has no real importance inasmuch as it affects only the adoption of resolutions which have no practical consequences;  
that, on the contrary, access to a table for discussion and negotiation where their problems would be taken into account and where they could influence really important decisions affecting their economies and their future has up to the present been denied to them.

These are strong words from someone who has an in depth knowledge of the way the UN system *really* works! These comments of course are made in view of the fact that those UN institutions which have real power, i.e. the World Bank and the IMF (the so-called Bretton Woods institutions) have a weighted voting system as well as rules governing staff management and salaries which differ from those of the rest of the UN system (Bertrand, 1988:219).

The United Nation's institutional design further complicates the decision-making process. For example, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which was created in 1964, has also been given the man-

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<sup>88</sup>. Page 18, *Everyone's United Nations - a Handbook on the Work of the United Nations*, Tenth Edition, New York, UN Department of Public Information, 1986, 484 p.

<sup>89</sup>. Page 236, Paul Taylor and A.J.R. Groom, 1988, *op. cit.*:

Maurice Bertrand was ... a Member of the Joint Inspection Unit of the UN System from 1968 to 1985. In 1986 he was a Member of the Group of Experts to review the efficiency of the functioning of the UN (the '*Group of 18*'). He has written numerous articles and reports on the UN system.

date, similar to ECOSOC, of coordinating international trade and related economic activities. Bertrand (1985) notes that this second central forum of international economic concerns sometimes leads to discussions of the same problems at both ECOSOC and UNCTAD. Coupled with the fact that the whole UN system is operating through sectoral organizations, this inflated and inefficient parallel structure has resulted, according to Bertrand, in a lack of depth in synthetic and interdisciplinary development studies, in spite of the fact that development assistance represents over 70% of the expenses of the UN system.

Bertrand (1985) concludes that the UN's problems cannot be overcome by improving managerial efficiencies alone but, that structural change is necessary. Building on the failure of the League of Nations, he sketches out the outlines of what he calls an "Organization of the Third Generation". He would leave the specialized agencies largely intact - perhaps for reasons of political expediency - except that much more emphasis would be placed on regional or sub-regional cooperation. At the same time, the multitude of small and scattered programs and projects would be replaced by fewer but more effective initiatives.

The principal change proposed by Bertrand (1985) would be the replacement of the General Assembly and of ECOSOC by a new double structure. On one hand, there would be a restricted body with real decision-making capability which would contain only about 18 members as ECOSOC originally had, and which might be called the 'Economic Security Council' to give it a high degree of status and recognizability. On the other hand, there would be a support structure consisting of one or several Commissions, which could be modelled after the Commission of the European Community. The Commissioners would be experts in different fields and they would at the same time represent the concerns of the countries not included in the Council. Bertrand's basic concern is to arrive at a structure which will not simply administer inadequate and dispersed resources, but which will be empowered to seriously negotiate geopolitical issues such as indebtedness, trade, environmental issues, and the UN budget.

It is interesting to note that Bertrand's 1985 proposal of an 'Economic Security Council' has very recently received public support from within the UN system. UNDP's Human Development Report 1992<sup>90</sup> promotes a 'Development Security Council', and refers to Bertrand's 1985 suggestions (p. 82 & 88). It also calls for a reform of the IMF and the establishment of an International Trade Organization (p. 79-82) - in fact this highly significant UNDP Report represents one of the very rare instances where a UN organization publicly criticizes other UN organizations, in this case mainly the IMF and the GATT!

The thorny issue of political representation is perhaps the Achilles' heel of the UN system. The principle of one country - one vote is the easy way out of the problem. It was presumably the only possible solution at the time when the UN was established after the Second World War. In the meantime, however, the General Assembly has become highly ineffective, mostly due to its absurdly inflated membership. Furthermore, as de Senarclens (1988) points out convincingly in much detail, the issue of representing peoples and minorities is entirely unresolved. At the same time, the major players have often treated this unique forum with what could be called benign neglect.

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<sup>90</sup>. Human Development Report 1992, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), New York, Oxford University Press, 1992, 216 p. (See especially Chapter 5: A New Vision for Global Human Development).

The adoption of a better representative distribution which respects political, economic and demographic realities is necessary in order to strengthen the UN system. A structure like the above-mentioned 'Economic Security Council' might include the following members: the industrialized 'G7' plus Russia, the eight largest developing countries, and delegates from regional organizations such as the European Community (EC), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Organization of American States (OAS), the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the Arab League, as full members or as observers.

The UN is generally given high marks for its role in the decolonization process. On the other hand, it was ineffective in alleviating significantly the often disastrous socio-economic situation of newly-independent countries, and it failed completely in preventing the gap between the North and the South from widening continuously. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that some authors have found the UN to be, as a book title suggests, 'Beyond Repair' (Simoni, 1972). For example, the member states have chosen to channel only 14 % of their already very stingy official development assistance through the UN system in the form of grants (7.6%) and concessional loans (6.1%) (Kimball, 1992:74). It can be argued, however, that the main blame should be placed squarely on the industrialized countries, and not on the 'messenger' who delivers the goods (or who doesn't).

As Kent (1988:138) points out, there is a subtle interplay between the UN and its member states: UN agencies can't really tell governments on whom they depend for funds what to do. On the other hand, governments often try to use IGOs for their own political objectives, which gives IGOs opportunities to play countries and groups of countries against each other. These constant political and economic trade-offs result in unpredictability and inconsistency, for which the member countries ultimately have to take the responsibility.

International relations at the beginning of the 1990s are caught between a resurgence of nationalism on one hand and the formation of large regional multi-national blocs on the other hand. With due respect to minority rights and cultural sovereignty, it is certainly not an exaggeration to state that the solution of international environmental problems is made more difficult if the geopolitical pendulum swings towards the nationalistic side, because an international approach towards these problems must integrate economic considerations.

We are living in an era which is characterized by global problems. At the same time effective global governance is presently a utopic goal. As a compromise and an incremental step into this direction, the formation of regional economic blocs may make dealing with global environmental problems more feasible. It could also make the administration of the UN and of its projects more effective. In fact, as mentioned earlier, discussions concerning the relationship between trade and the environment, and with it a reform of GATT are certainly one of the most complex and most politicized problems the UN is facing in the 1990s. At the same time, however, one should not forget that local environmental problems will worsen if the local authorities don't have the power and the political will to safeguard their environment. The enormous environmental destruction in the former Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe which have recently come to light have made this abundantly clear.

The ultimate challenge for the UN lies in coming to terms with the *new transnational forces* which presently sweep across the global arena with unexpected speed. Global environmental problems make up a major portion of these forces. At the same time the UN needs to create new ways of solving its eternal problem of

political representation. This restructuring process will probably take quite a while. Summit meetings among the principal nations and regional blocs should be able to facilitate understanding and cooperation.

Changing organizational structures, however, will not be sufficient. March and Olson (1989:76) speak of the rhetoric of *realpolitik* which invariably accompanies organizational change. They point out that this process is of a highly political nature, and therefore must reflect the real, not just the rhetoric values and interests of the actors involved in order to be effective. The challenge for the UN lies in developing organizational structures capable of reconciling political expediency with those common values, which bring nearly all countries together in this global forum. Hopefully, the UN's 50-year anniversary in 1995 will catalyze some badly needed reform efforts.

## 5.2. Planning Cycles

One of the organizational and managerial problems the UN system is faced with is that its various components have pushed their cherished autonomy so far, that they have not even been able to agree on a common time frame for their individual budgeting and planning cycles. For instance, the UN secretariat functions on the basis of six-year Medium-Term Plans, of which the last one covered 1984-1989<sup>91</sup>. Because of administrative changes brought about by the 1986 financial crisis, the UN secretariat decided not to go ahead with the 1990-1995 plan, but to extend the previous plan for the 1990-91 biennium before starting the 1992-1997 period. UNEP, in the meantime, claimed that it was too far advanced with its second SWMTEP cycle covering the years 1990-95, as well as with its own Medium-Term Plan for the same period, to adopt the two-year extension.

At its 1988 Special Session, UNEP's Governing Council recommended to the General Assembly in decision SS1/3<sup>92</sup> to adopt for the UN secretariat's planning process the structure of its own 1990-95 SWMTEP. UNEP was successful, the Environment Section of the March 30, 1990 version of the Proposed Medium-Term Plan for 1992-97 shows the same division of 12 sub-programmes as SWMTEP. In this case, UNEP seems to have been ready early and it put the UN secretariat before the *fait accompli* of its own systemwide environment program which was then adopted.

This whole process appears rather confusing and certainly does not facilitate inter-agency cooperation, especially when one considers that UNDP for instance has a four-year cycle (1987-1991). One may wonder how many costly hours of CPC, ACABQ and ACC meetings are wasted on unnecessary discussions and negotiations regarding harmonization of planning and budgeting cycles!

This complicated and expensive exercise seems even more unwarranted if one considers the comment of one of the participants who noted that the important programming and budgeting decisions are not really taken at CPC but at the General Assembly's Second Committee and at the specialized agencies' governing bodies, and that in any case a six-year cycle may be appropriate in economic areas, but in the environment and other highly politicized fields a six-year cycle is much too long,

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<sup>91</sup> Medium-Term Plan for the Period 1984-1989, General Assembly, 37th Session, Suppl. No. 6 (A/37/6), UN.

<sup>92</sup> UNEP Report of the Governing Council on the Work of its First Special Session, 14-18 March, 1988, GA, 43rd Session, Suppl. No. 25 (A/43/25).

since too much happens in the interval. This would explain why governments often send second or third secretaries instead of ambassadors to the CPC. In order to adjust to unforeseen events, the six-year plan needs to be restructured, which is another complicated and costly process of questionable value. According to the same commentator, this observation also applies to the SWMTEP which he thinks should not cover more than two years.

### 5.3. Environmental Coordinating Mechanisms

The coordination of the countless programs and projects which are executed by the United Nation's various specialized agencies and other bodies independently or jointly is exceedingly complex. In the field of the environment the most important inter-agency coordinating mechanisms are ACC, DOEM and CIDIE.

#### 5.3.1. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC)

This committee represents the highest level of inter-agency cooperation and meets normally every year in April and in October. It has about 20 members who are theoretically the heads of the specialized agencies and other UN bodies such as UNEP. They meet under the chairmanship of the UN Secretary-General. In practice, however, the agency heads often delegate senior officials to represent them at the meetings. This committee is the negotiating table, where agency heads discuss and negotiate joint activities as well as conflicts between themselves. ACC has over 20 subcommittees. Environmental issues are mostly dealt with at the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational Activities) (CCSQ(OPS)). The System-Wide Medium-Term Environment Programme (SWMTEP) is the most important tool for intervention in environmental issues which is placed under ACC's authority<sup>93</sup>.

Unlike ECOSOC which is an intergovernmental organization doing its coordinating task in public, ACC is very discreet. In view of the specialized agencies' autonomy, Gordenker (1984:32) notes about ACC that it "resembles a gathering of feudal lords". According to a high-level UN official interviewed, the case of UNEP in this context is "particularly acute" in the sense that it defends its independence with remarkable vigor.

Dr. Tolba was considered to be very powerful and to enjoy substantial political backing, especially among the numerous African countries. Although UNEP's official status is only that of an ECOSOC-related programme, and although it is much smaller than most of the specialized agencies, he enjoyed, in practical terms, the same status and prestige as agency heads do.

The power relation at the UN between international civil servants and government representatives is delicate and diffuse, it depends on their knowledge, hierarchical level, connections, and the importance of the member country. The power of international civil servants within the UN system may in some cases decrease the UN's capacity to act effectively, if it is not exercised with great sensitivity. If major member countries perceive that their objectives are not taken seriously by the UN, they tend to react by replacing senior government representatives, such as

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<sup>93</sup>. Page 51, UNEP, Report of the Governing Council on the Work of its 14th session, 8-19 June, 1987, Suppl. No. 25 (25/42/25), New York, 138 p.

ministers or ambassadors, with officials of a lower rank at UN meetings and councils. This is indeed a problem for the Governing Council, where the participation of important ministers tends to be below UNEP's expectations. ACC is another example. In July 1988, ACC had a meeting with the government representatives of the Committee on Programme Coordination (CPC) about which UNEP's executive director reported:

There had been a feeling of frustration on the side of the UN administration representatives (ACC). While the ACC was represented at the level of the heads of agencies, most CPC members were not represented at even the ambassadorial level. For this reason it was quite difficult to discuss issues, particularly when the representatives from CPC could not get instructions from their capitals in due time<sup>94</sup>.

This report was conveyed to the 'Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP' in Nairobi, presumably in the hope that the staff of the various embassies attending the meeting would transmit this sense of frustration to their respective governments. These two examples of relatively low government representation illustrate the subtle ways governments have, to express their evaluation of the importance of a council or a meeting for their own objectives. This of course is not necessarily a negative judgement on the work of the Governing Council or ACC, it may simply be a reflection of the true priority given by governments to issues such as global environmental concerns or multilateral development assistance!

On July 9-10, 1988, the ACC members met in Oslo at the invitation of Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, in order to study ways of promoting the sustainable development concept, which was advocated by the 1987 Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development she had chaired. This was actually the first time that all agency and programme heads got together. As a World Bank official noted during an interview: "The environment seems to have provided sufficient common ground ..." This being said, it should be noted that the World Bank and the IMF are not very active at ACC. The IMF isn't active in the protection of the environment anywhere, and the World Bank's preferred UN forum for discussing environmental issues is, as we shall see below, the Committee of International Development Institutions on the Environment (CIDIE).

The participants of this 1988 ACC meeting in Oslo decided to create an ad-hoc ACC taskforce at the executive head level under the authority of the UN Secretary-General which should elaborate a framework for system-wide sustainable development policies. In spite of the fact that this task force was later formalized at a regular ACC meeting in May 1989 by decision 1989/2<sup>95</sup>, it never really got off the ground. At least one if not *the* major reason according to several close observers was UNEP's resistance to what it considered an infringement on its coordinating mandate. This task force was supposed to have the responsibility for the preparation of the Rio Conference, but at the beginning of 1990 this task was taken over by the conference's Preparatory Committee.

In spite of the failure of this task force, the idea of an ACC committee on the environment still has proponents who succeeded in reviving it at UNCED. Agenda 21

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<sup>94</sup>. Page 2, Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP, UNEP/CPR. 15/2, 25 October 1988, 15 p.

<sup>95</sup>. Page 3, ACC/1988/DEC/1-20, 8 May 1989, Decisions adopted by ACC on Coordination at its first regular session of 1989, 19-21 April, 1989, 18 p.

in paragraphs 38.16/17<sup>96</sup> spells out the need for a coordination mechanism under the direct leadership of the Secretary-General and specifies:

ACC should consider establishing a special task force, subcommittee or sustainable development board, taking into account the experience of the Designated Officials for Environmental Matters (DOEM), and the Committee of International Development Institutions (CIDIE), as well as the respective roles of UNEP and CIDIE.

It is quite clear that this initiative adds further weight to the above-made argument, that if UNEP continues to insist on centralizing coordination in Nairobi, the UN system will create environmental coordination mechanisms outside UNEP. It would be in the interest of the developing countries and in the long-term interest of the environment, to keep the coordinating task as much as possible within UNEP. *The only way to achieve this is to transfer it out of Nairobi to UNEP's New York and Geneva offices.* Alternatively, we shall see the emergence of new coordinating centers under stronger control of economic forces such as the World Bank, which are dominated by the industrialized countries.

UNEP's relationship with ACC has been strained even before this development. At its inception in 1972, UNEP's structure included an Environmental Control Board (ECB), which had the mandate of interagency coordination (Caldwell, 1984:63). In 1977, however, ACC decided to abolish it<sup>97</sup>, and to take over those functions itself. Subsequently it created the Committee of Designated Officials for Environmental Matters (DOEM) which is discussed below. This was generally understood to be a serious blow to the idea of environmental coordination throughout the UN system in general, and for UNEP's prestige in this regard in particular (Kilian, 1987:366). As a matter of fact, one of UNEP's former top-level administrators commented on that loss: "the system beat us down..."

The reason for the elimination of the ECB, according to a participant from the UN secretariat, was that ECB created endless and wasteful subunits. This may be true and perhaps wasteful indeed, but the real reason is more likely the resistance of the leadership of at least some of the agencies within ACC to the idea of an effective coordination, which would have restrained their autonomy. As we have seen, for most of the specialized agencies any reduction of their autonomy is strictly an anathema.

### 5.3.2. The Designated Officials for Environmental Matters of the UN System (DOEM)

As we have seen, ACC provides the organizational framework for inter-agency cooperation in all sectors at the political level, and it provides guidelines for its member organizations regarding environmental activities, albeit at a very general level. DOEM, on the other hand, is a committee which unites those representatives from the specialized agencies, who are specifically involved in environmental activities. It can be considered informally as ACC's environmental executive organ. It reports to the Governing Council through ACC.

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<sup>96</sup>. Page 297, *Environmental Policy and Law*, August 1992, Vol. 22/4.

<sup>97</sup>. The 1977 General Assembly confirmed this decision through Resolution 32/197.

DOEM meets twice a year formally and once informally. It is not an official but an advisory body. Specific functional issues within DOEM's purview such as environmental education or environmental and health hazards in agriculture are handled by the sector-related professionals through Thematic Joint Programmes (TJPs), which are planned in 6-year cycles. In practice, joint programming is based on the 'bottom up' principle, it starts at the TJP level, and then works its way up to ACC via DOEM.

DOEM suffers from the fact that the specialized agencies often delegate representatives of uneven levels, e.g. programme officers are often replacing their political supervisors. Interviews in Nairobi and at some participating agencies have shown that DOEM is generally disliked by the agencies as well as by UNEP. It was described by one of its UNEP participants as "exceptionally tiresome". Tensions and frustrations often come across in meetings. They result largely from the fact that the independent-minded agencies tend to resent the efforts by anyone to coordinate their activities and thereby to limit their choices. Several interviews gave the clear impression that this is a problem particularly with UNESCO and FAO. UNEP's relations with both agencies would probably be best described, on the whole, as rather cool.

On the other hand, the World Bank until recently hesitated in participating in DOEM meetings in spite of DOEM's explicit invitation to join the discussions<sup>98</sup>. A World Bank official questioned on this refusal answered that in view of the Bank's active involvement in environmental coordination activities through CIDIE (which will be discussed in the next section), the time and money involved in attending these meetings was judged, for the time being, to be "not worthwhile". DOEM was seen as being "not effective", but at the same time it was considered to be improving, and the Bank's participation in the future was under consideration.

One of DOEM's most important tasks is the evaluation and review process of the System-Wide Medium-Term Environment Programme (SWMTEP 1990-1995)<sup>99</sup>. Starting 1994, every 6 years a one week Special Session of the Governing Council is planned, in order to finalize the review of SWMTEP and to provide the major guidelines for the next 6-year cycle. DOEM is expected to provide most of the preparations for these Sessions.

UNEP officials in Nairobi complained about a lack of feedback from the specialized agencies regarding the effectiveness and usefulness of SWMTEP. Governments too, in general, fail to give UNEP a clear idea regarding their feelings about SWMTEP. This may be due to the difficulty of obtaining a consensus among the various ministries involved. Another reason is that government officials are often confused by the complexities of SWMTEP; the fact that they change positions more often than the relatively stable UN officials makes it more difficult for them to familiarize themselves with SWMTEP.

This lack of interest in SWMTEP from its member states is very deleterious to UNEP's coordinating efficacy, as a UNEP official stressed: "Coordination can only be effective once governments realize the need for it". Since one of SWMTEP's main purposes is to inform governments about the UN system's environmental activities so that they can give pertinent and coherent instructions to their delegations in the specialized agencies through the various Ministries, this state of affairs should be

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<sup>98</sup>. Page 6, Report of the 1987 UNEP Governing Council, *loc. cit.*

<sup>99</sup>. Page 102, The United Nations System-Wide Medium-Term Environment Programme, 1990-1995, Nairobi, UNEP, 103 p.

particularly worrisome for UNEP! Certain UNEP officials will admit that SWMTEP is not effective, yet but most of them tend to gloss over these difficulties.

The resolution of inter-agency and inter-ministerial conflicts is one of the most important and sensitive topics in the field of UN-wide environmental coordination. These conflicts result in a lack of strong support for cooperation through SWMTEP or through other means. For instance, interviews with some of UNDP's environmental specialists have shown that SWMTEP has little meaning for them. Furthermore, these tensions also prevent a clearly articulated constructive criticism of SWMTEP. As a consequence, UNEP is being left in the dark about the success or failure of its main coordinating and planning tool. In view of SWMTEP's importance and of its potential to make the UN system more effective in environmental matters, every effort should be undertaken to make its application and its review process more transparent and forceful. Certainly UNEP could make a bigger effort to solicit opinions about SWMTEP, particularly those it has difficulties with.

Last but not least, another big obstacle for DOEM's effectiveness is the fact that its secretariat is provided by UNEP at its Nairobi Headquarters. The secretariats of most of the specialized agencies, however, are located in Geneva or within an hour's flight from Geneva. It would be far more sensible and practical to transfer the DOEM secretariat to UNEP's Geneva office, which would be part of the restructuring of UNEP's coordination activities discussed earlier. As a matter of fact, DOEM itself has explicitly arrived at this rather obvious conclusion in at least one case. In a DOEM document regarding the 'Integration of Environmental Considerations in Development Planning'<sup>100</sup> the authors state: "The activities should be centralized in Geneva. Working together intensively would not be possible otherwise."

### 5.3.3. The Committee of International Development Institutions on the Environment (CIDIE)

CIDIE was created in 1980 as a forum for environmental discussion and cooperation among the major multilateral financing institutions inside and outside the UN such as the World Bank, UNDP, the Asian Development Bank etc<sup>101</sup>. There are presently 16 members<sup>102</sup>. FAO and the World Food Programme (WFP) have been pushing for

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<sup>100</sup>. Page 2, UNEP/DOEM/1988/4/Annex V, Integration of Environmental Considerations in Development Planning, 3 p., Summary of informal consultations held at Geneva on 17/9/1987 and 7/1/1988; participating: ILO, UNEP, UNIDO, WHO, WMO, FAO and UNESCO.

<sup>101</sup>. *Action and Inter-Action: The Role and Potential of CIDIE*, Vol. 1, Nairobi, CIDIE secretariat, 1989, 80 p.

<sup>102</sup>. Following are CIDIE's members:

- UNEP
- World Bank
- UNDP
- Commission of the European Communities
- African Development Bank
- Asian Development Bank
- Inter-American Development Bank
- Organization of American States
- Caribbean Development Bank
- European Investment Bank
- Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa
- International Fund for Agricultural Development

admission for a long time and were admitted in 1990. An interview at one of the founding members revealed some resentment over this extension of the membership because these are not financial institutions. Not only could this extension open the door for others, these different kinds of members may make negotiations among financial institutions more difficult. On the other hand, the membership of FAO and the WFP is probably beneficial for the countries receiving financial assistance, even if it complicates CIDIE's traditional business practices.

There are also about 50 organizations with observer status. These include NGOs such as the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the World Resources Fund (WRI) or the World Wildlife fund (WWF), IGOs such as UNESCO or OECD, and bilateral donor agencies such as the USAID or CIDA. The members are all institutions whose legislative councils are made up of delegations of sovereign nations, not private or nongovernmental organizations. The meetings are annual and take place according to a geographical rotation formula at members' head offices. UNEP is one of the founding members and it has been given the responsibility of maintaining the CIDIE's secretariat in Nairobi. CIDIE's scope and mandate can be summarized by a paragraph in its Founding Declaration:

... the undersigned will ... enter into cooperative negotiations with governments, and other international organizations, recipients of development financing, to ensure integration of appropriate environmental measures in the design and implementation of economic development activities<sup>103</sup>.

After 10 years of existence, CIDIE, in its own judgement, "has had a beneficial influence on its members, but its full potential is yet to be materialized"<sup>104</sup>. The main problem most likely lies in the area of cooperation with the specialized UN agencies. DOEM, which can be considered as the mouth-piece of the agencies regarding environmental affairs, aired its dissatisfaction diplomatically as follows:

With regard to the integration of environmental concerns into development planning and projects, DOEM expressed a wish for more active cooperation with the major funding agencies and with CIDIE<sup>105</sup>.

The member institutions are quite different in mandate and constituency, as well as in their practices. Therefore, they have made efforts to harmonize their annual reporting to CIDIE, in order to facilitate information exchange, technical cooperation, environmental education, and training.

During each meeting member institutions suggest special themes for discussion. It was decided to treat only two technical subjects at each meeting in order to make a more thorough assessment possible. Special attention is focused on procedural matters, i.e. internal and external organizational as well as political issues.

One of the participants interviewed complained that UNEP has not taken its task of providing the CIDIE secretariat seriously enough. Until recently there was not

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- Central American Bank for Economic Integration
  - Nordic Development Bank
  - Food and Agricultural Organizations
  - World Food Programme

<sup>103</sup>. Page 1, *Action and Interaction*, 1990, *op. cit.*

<sup>104</sup>. Page 5, *Action and Interaction*, 1990, *op. cit.*

<sup>105</sup>. Page 8, *UNEP 1987 Annual Report of the Executive Director*, Nairobi, 1988, 280 p.

even a full-time position assigned to it. Additional friction was caused by Dr. Tolba's often forceful defense of environmental matters in press conferences - this stance is considered by some of the more conservative CIDIE members as being too aggressive. As a UNEP participant expressed it: "Banks remain banks - the environment has difficulties in penetrating into their traditional, economic thinking with a short-term orientation". The role which the CIDIE secretariat should play is seen by them as "neutral" and not as an agent for change. Clearly, UNEP will need to muster all its diplomatic skills in dealing with the financial institutions. They might decide to transfer the CIDIE secretariat to another member institution.

Last but not least, the Nairobi location as well as UNEP's centralized management practices were also mentioned as very serious obstacles to cooperation. The combination of geographical isolation and the self-imposed centralization were called by a participant in these negotiations "a tragedy, fatal for UNEP's coordinating mandate". This of course is the same problem as the above-mentioned location of the DOEM secretariat except, that economic and political issues are mainly negotiated in New York. UNEP would therefore be well advised to transfer the CIDIE secretariat to its New York office and to give it a much higher priority and profile! Such a move might help in adding to the CIDIE membership the only major UN financial institution still recalcitrant to environmental considerations, namely the IMF, an addition which Kimball (1992:9) has called for.

Outside these three coordinating mechanisms, contacts take place formally and informally in a number of forums. Of particular importance for UNEP is the UN General Assembly's Second Committee (Economic and Financial Matters) which discusses environmental matters theoretically every second year, but in practice every year. When they are not explicitly on the agenda they are discussed under different headings.

The complexity of environmental coordination throughout the UN system is quite staggering due to its wide economic, political, scientific and institutional ramifications. The task is made more difficult due to the recent trend in the UN to rely increasingly on decisions based on consensus rather than on majorities. This trend is pushed by the major contributors because it allows them a better control over the UN's budgets, programs and projects, in short over its real policies.

The same thing happens at the specialized agencies. They are dominated by ministerial delegations, which are often not coordinated among themselves by the respective ministries of their member governments. As a result of this ministerial autonomy, a country's delegations may take incoherent positions let's say on pesticide regulations in negotiations at FAO, GATT, WHO and UNEP. Puchala and Coate (1989:87) comment on this situation, which is one of the UN's biggest policy-making problems, as follows: "Not surprisingly, the politics of consensus-building may yield very different policies on similar issues in different agencies". These are extremely difficult external constraints for UNEP to deal with. Maybe UNEP couldn't possibly succeed in its coordinating mandate but its self-imposed centralization in Nairobi has made things even worse.

#### 5.4. Other Environmentally Active International Organizations (EAIOS)

The purpose of this section is not really a presentation of other institutions involved in the environment, but a further discussion of UNEP's organizational environment. This

is necessary in order to complement the understanding of the organizational network in which UNEP is placed. The discussion will be limited to UNEP's two major cooperating organizations, whose membership consists fully or partially of governments: UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme and the International Union for the Protection of Nature (IUCN). The early history of both organizations was referred to in the discussion of UNEP's creation.

#### 5.4.1. What is an EAIO?

There is a semantic problem here: What are we to call the category of organizations of importance to UNEP which are as different from each other as for instance the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) is from the World Bank? The World Bank can't be called an environmental organization because it has many other priorities but environmental concerns do play a major and indeed increasing role in its general orientation.

In order to group intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) inside and outside the UN system, which are either dedicated to environmental concerns or which give a high priority to environmental problems in their activities, the term *Environmentally Active International Organizations* will be used here. These organizations often have an explicit structure focusing on environmental matters which contains the word 'environment' in its name, e.g. the World Bank's Environment Department. In other cases, however, e.g. in UNDP's Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO), which deals with desertification in Sub-Sahara Africa, the environmental preoccupation is not apparent in the name.

The creation of this term has become necessary, because more and more international organizations have seen the need to address environmental problems in their purview through the formation of specialized units or to emphasize them as an integral part of their general mandate. Kilian (1987:63) has fought with the problem of finding an appropriate term over two pages; he then winds up calling all these organizations international environmental organizations (Internationale Umweltorganisationen). However, in view of the fact that many of these organizations have their principal mandate in other domains, his term doesn't really seem appropriate. He then devotes a full chapter (pp. 328-354) to an interesting typology of these organizations from a legal standpoint. His arrives at the conclusion that the degree of cooperation and interdisciplinarity among international organizations is much higher in the field of the environment than anywhere else.

The term EAIO as it is used here includes IGOs as well as INGOs which are as varied as for instance UNEP, FAO, CIDA, or Friends of the Earth. Obviously not every international organization having or claiming to have environmental concerns can be considered an EAIO, or else General Motors and McDonald's would have to be included here too. The distinctive feature of EAIO consists in their mandate to solve environmental problems not created by themselves. Naturally there are some borderline organizations such as UNIDO or ILO, which do have some environmental projects, but which so far have not really established an environmental profile for themselves.

#### 5.4.2. The 'Man and the Biosphere' Programme

Most specialized agencies and other UN bodies have some kind of an environmental unit, and describing them would go far beyond this study, without contributing much

to the understanding of UNEP. There is one organization, however, which stands out among UN bodies in the field of the environment, and which deserves some attention here: UNESCO's Paris-based Programme on Man and the Biosphere (MAB). MAB is an environmental program, which is in many ways complementary to UNEP. It is much smaller with only about 15 professional positions (compared to UNEP's approximately 250), of which about half are UNESCO positions, and the others are financed by national contributions. MAB is a few months older than UNEP, it was created by UNESCO in November 1971.

There is some cooperation between UNEP and MAB, for instance at the Technical University Dresden (Germany) where the two organizations hold an annual post-graduate training course from October to July. Every year 15-18 students are trained in ecological approaches to development in developing countries. According to a MAB official, the course has been given for over ten years and is a successful joint activity. Another MAB official, however, pointed out that there is on the whole really not much cooperation between the two organizations. It should be pointed out, that in the past UNEP used to provide considerably more funding for UNESCO than now, not only in environmental education. UNEP, however, has never considered itself as a funding agency like UNDP. Over the last few years, as UNEP has reduced its funding for UNESCO projects, cooperation has declined. MAB doesn't seem to have much use for UNEP other than for its project funding, and UNEP doesn't rely a great deal on MAB's expertise, which is generally of a more local nature.

This has resulted in two environmental sister organizations in the UN system with surprisingly few common interests. The main difference between MAB and UNEP is that MAB works through national scientific committees in over 100 countries, whereas UNEP deals mainly with global environmental issues. MAB's national committees are multidisciplinary teams doing problem-oriented research in conjunction with local universities and other research institutions. Their mandate is to emphasize the interaction between ecological and social systems - an area in which UNEP is hardly active at all.

MAB enjoys a considerable degree of autonomy within UNESCO, it has its own intergovernmental governing body, the MAB International Coordinating Council (ICC), which is composed of 30 elected member-states of which half are elected every two years at UNESCO's General Conference (they can be re-elected). Since in UNEP's case the 58 Governing Council member-states are elected by the UN General Assembly, one may conclude that the relationship between MAB and UNESCO is in some ways comparable to UNEP's relationship with the UN secretariat. There is a MAB-ICC Bureau to prepare the Council sessions, and a secretariat for ongoing affairs, and for the maintenance of liaison with the National Committees and various EAIOS<sup>106</sup>.

MAB has traditionally had a very broad area of activities, from cities to coastal and arid zones, from the tropics to temperate and cold zones. For the 1990s, ICC has given the Programme an orientation which emphasizes its socio-economic dimensions more than was previously the case<sup>107</sup>. One of the aims of this strengthened interest in exploring the *human dimensions* of ecosystem management is to arrive at a process which will link science and policy.

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<sup>106</sup> Programme on Man and the Biosphere (MAB) - A Practical Guide to MAB, Paris, UNESCO, 1987, 40 p.

<sup>107</sup> Page 12, Programme on MAB, *op. cit.*

By using a very strictly structured internal screening procedure, MAB selects a certain number of so-called Pilot Projects which can be used to demonstrate the linkage of socio-economic, physical and biological systems. For instance, from 1976 to 1984 MAB studied nomadic pastoralists in Northern Kenya in conjunction with the Kenyan government and with UNEP's regional office for Africa in Nairobi<sup>108</sup>. One of the objectives was to generate research results and scientific publications which will be relevant to arid and semi-arid zones worldwide, particularly in Sub-Sahara Africa.

An important priority for MAB is the establishment and study of so-called Biosphere Reserves. These are territories selected for their rich biodiversity, as well as for their potential for demonstration and training in sustainable development principles. They contain a strictly protected core area which is surrounded by a buffer zone such as a national park. This zone in turn is surrounded by a transition area which is less clearly delineated, and where local authorities are involved in sustainable development planning.

#### 5.4.3. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

IUCN is a very unique organization in the field of international environmental affairs in that it is a hybrid between an IGO and an NGO. It is located in Gland, Switzerland, in the outskirts of Geneva. Its membership includes presently 62 governments, 107 governmental agencies, as well 405 national and 38 international NGOs which have all the same membership rights and cooperate on an unusual common basis. The voting procedure at its General Assembly is quite complex. Essentially, a double majority of governmental and non-governmental members is required for each decision. IUCN's mission is "to provide international leadership for the conservation and management of living resources"<sup>109</sup>.

UNEP and IUCN cooperate on numerous projects, especially joint publications. Perhaps the best know are the "Red Data Books" on endangered species. Interviews at IUCN have shown a certain amount of frustration vis-a-vis UNEP's bureaucracy, e.g. a lack of feedback or even in some cases acknowledgement of IUCN's contribution to joint efforts. IUCN considers that it can do many projects more efficiently than UNEP. It is indeed competing with UNEP in areas such as protecting endangered species where it has a solid international reputation, and in strengthening international law.

IUCN's assets include two specialized world information centers, the World Conservation Monitoring Centre dealing with wildlife and protected areas in Cambridge, UK, and the Environmental Law Center in Bonn, Germany, which plays a cardinal role in the development and implementation of conservation treaties, conventions and agreements. Furthermore, it has six regional field offices in Africa, Central America and Asia. Finally, IUCN operates the secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) on behalf of UNEP in Lausanne, Switzerland.

In 1980, IUCN has published, in conjunction with UNEP and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) the *World Conservation Strategy*<sup>110</sup>, a blueprint for sustainable development. This is one of the earliest publications, perhaps even the first, to use the term

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<sup>108</sup>. Page 22, *Man Belongs to the Earth - International Cooperation in Environmental Research*, Paris MAB/UNESCO, 1988, 175 p.

<sup>109</sup>. Page 345, *International Environmental Affairs*, Fall 1990, Vol. 2/4.

<sup>110</sup>. *World Conservation Strategy - Living Resource Conservation for Sustainable Development*, Gland, Switzerland, IUCN, UNEP, WWF, 1980.

'sustainable development' (p. IV) which became more generally adopted only after the publication of the report of the World Commission for Environment and Development *Our Common Future*. The same three organizations (WWF changed its name in the meantime to World Wide Fund for Nature for its European Operations) published a second world conservation strategy project in 1991 under the title of *Caring for the Earth*<sup>111</sup>, which received a great deal of attention in the international development community. This is a major project, which was supported by numerous bilateral development agencies such as the Canadian International Development Agency, UN agencies and INGOs. It has a stronger orientation toward practical implementation than its predecessor and focuses on three themes:

- essential ecological processes and life-support systems must be maintained;
- genetic diversity must be preserved;
- any use of species or ecosystems must be sustainable.

IUCN's strong links with both governments and the NGO community provides it with a very peculiar strategic position with respect to the UN context. At the Rio Conference there was a general feeling that NGOs will have an increasingly important role to play in the future, both in the decision-making process and in the execution of projects. It remains to be seen whether IUCN will manage to take advantage of this new constellation. If it is successful in benefitting from this trend, it may possibly become not only a stronger partner but also a stronger competitor for UNEP. Transnational corporations are commonly competing and cooperating with each other at the same time, maybe we shall see the same phenomenon more and more at the UN.

UNEP has been criticized in interviews with NGO representatives for not fully exploiting potential opportunities in its cooperation with NGOs. Indeed, the UN system and the often quite fuzzy borders between UN bodies and NGOs provide not only constraints for UNEP, but also opportunities and challenges. The competition from the inherently less politicized and more flexible IUCN should constitute an incentive for UNEP to pay particular attention to its cooperation with NGOs.

This chapter has provided the institutional context for the following analysis of UNEP's strategic position vis-à-vis the two biggest multilateral development institutions. We have seen that this context is exceedingly complex and dynamic. The nature of the UN system imposes many political, diplomatic, financial and institutional constraints, and even threats, on the organizational domain of UNEP. At the same time, it provides UNEP's leadership with strategic opportunities. We shall see in the next chapter how it managed to use its strengths, and to overcome its weaknesses, in a proactive move which allowed it to join the Global Environment Facility, a joint venture with the World Bank and UNDP, which will have a crucial role to play in the implementation of Agenda 21.

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<sup>111</sup>. *Caring for the Earth - A Strategy for Sustainable Living*, Project Director: David A. Munroe, Gland, Switzerland, IUCN, UNEP, WWF, 1991, 228 p.

## CHAPTER 6

### NEW COMPETITORS AS A STRATEGIC ISSUE

At this point in time (December 1992), twenty years after its creation, a few months after the Rio Conference, and in the wake of the resignation of Dr. Tolba, who lead the organization for 16 years, UNEP is entering what may be called without hyperbole its *second phase*. Much has been achieved, the highlights of these efforts are synthesized in the Annex. At the same time, much remains to be done in a UN environment which has changed dramatically since 1972. The bipolar strategic superpower constellation has yielded to an era of largely unexpected and uncontrolled national and sub-national upheavals rooted in ethnic, religious, economic and political conflicts. Since the 1987 publication of the Brundtland Report, the sustainable development concept has already had a powerful influence on policies throughout the UN system. The institutional changes resulting from these policies are at the centerstage of UNEP's strategic perspectives. How can the decisions of the Rio Conference be implemented in this context? How is UNEP affected by these transformations? These are the challenges facing UNEP's leadership in its second phase.

#### 6.1. The Emerging Positioning of UNEP's Principal Economic Cooperating Agencies

The World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are clearly UNEP's main economic cooperating agencies. The basic difference between the two is that the World Bank makes loans, whereas UNDP provides grants for projects which are in most cases implemented by the UN's specialized agencies.

##### 6.1.1. The World Bank and Environmental Politics

The World Bank has a massive influence on the whole UN system simply due to the sheer size of its loan portfolio: it lends US\$ 23 billion<sup>112</sup> per year to developing countries and 'economies in transition' as the formerly communist countries are often called. About a quarter of this amount is lent on very flexible terms to the poorest countries through a branch of the World Bank called 'International Development Association' (IDA). For comparison, UNDP's 1992 grants total approximately US\$ 1.5

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<sup>112</sup>. "The In-your-face Economist at the World Bank", *Business Week*, May 11, 1992, p. 76.

billion<sup>113</sup>, and the specialized agencies' budget is only a few hundred million dollars for each of them. Obviously, the Bank's huge financial clout in relation to the rest of the UN system puts it in a position of obtaining a dominating stature in UN-wide sustainable development coordination efforts. As long as the environment and economic development were distinctly separated, the World Bank and UNEP did not cooperate a great deal except for routine contacts such as their participation in CIDIE. Now however, with the emphasis on integrating the environment into socio-economic planning that situation has changed.

Discussions of the environmental impact of World Bank projects are not a recent phenomenon, they have a long history of controversy. This impact includes adverse health effects due to vector-borne tropical diseases such as malaria, sleeping sickness, schistosomiasis or river blindness which are often a great concern in irrigation and hydroelectrical projects. A case in point is the Volta River Project in Ghana, in which the World Bank was involved. It was planned in the 1950s and executed in the 1960s. Studies published by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine in 1956 (!) were deemed by the Environmental Advisor to the World Bank in the early 1980s to "constitute a model for the planner who is responsible for considering the human health factors of a development project" (Lee, 1985:77). Payer (1982:265), on the other hand, has found that schistosomiasis and river blindness caused by this project were vastly underestimated and trivialized by the World Bank.

To make things worse, Payer argues in much detail, the project was also an economic disaster for the people of the valley and for Ghana in general. Nevertheless, Ghana is stuck with this debt and has to service it. A debt incurred for a project which has been approved by the World Bank's experts although it is ill-conceived may be called an 'odious debt'. The term has been developed by Alexander Nahum Sachs, a professor of law in Paris in the 1920s. He considered that debts not created in the interest of the state should not be reimbursed by it (Adams, 1991:165). He had in mind debts incurred by despots, but certain debts incurred through the incompetence of donor agencies' economists, engineers and other experts may have to be included here too. Otherwise, it would follow that donor agencies should be in a position to learn how to plan and implement their projects at the expense of the developing countries; this is obviously difficult to accept. In any case, UNEP's 1989 Governing Council has come out strongly in favor of debt relief in Decision 15/6:

... the urgent need to change positively the existing conditions of treatment of the foreign debt of developing countries, in order to strengthen their capacity to address the critical environmental issues fundamental to development and protection of the environment<sup>114</sup>.

The World Bank has started to take a specific and active interest in environmental issues around 1970. Le Prestre (1989:22) shows how Robert McNamara, its President at that time, was influenced in this sense by his friendship with Barbara Ward. At that time at least, the Bank's concern for environmental matters came from the top and found little support by the economists involved in project planning. The first environmental unit was created in 1971. In 1972 the Office for

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<sup>113</sup> 1992 *United Nations Handbook*, Published by the Ministry of External Relations and Trade, Wellington, New Zealand, 1992, 295 p.

<sup>114</sup> Decisions Adopted by the Governing Council at its 15th Session (Na.89-3253 - 1544E).

Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OESA) was created (p. 182). At that time, however, the Bank was quite ready to justify environmental costs with economic arguments, as long as the project itself was not threatened through environmental degradation. On the whole, OESA had little influence on operational issues which is where funds and power usually are concentrated:

Implementation and the enforcement of regulation are crucial elements of an effective environmental policy. Busy with promoting the idea of environmental protection and lacking resources, OESA neglected the operational phases of the policy. Once environmental caveats were introduced into a project it did not follow that they would translate into an improved situation in the field. Poor implementation, rather than design, often caused environmental damage (Le Prestre, 1989:183).

In 1987 the World Bank replaced the small OESA with a considerably larger Environment Department. It reports to the Senior Vice President, Policy, Research and External Affairs and publishes a very informative *Environment Bulletin* four times per year. At the same time, an Environmental Division was tacked on to the Technical Departments of each of the Bank's four Regional Offices. This is undoubtedly an improvement over OESA which comprised only a few professionals. The total yearly budget of all these new environmental assessment units as of 1990, however, was only US\$ 11.7 million<sup>115</sup>. That still represents only 0.05 percent of the bank's yearly loan portfolio. It would be hard to argue that 0.05% of project expenditures represent an adequate share of their budget to carry out serious environmental impact assessments. Bank lending on "primarily environmental objectives" amounted to US\$ 1.6 billion for fiscal 1991, which represents a quadrupling of the previous year's allocation<sup>116</sup>. This looks quite impressive, but one should not be surprised to find, thanks to creative accounting and statistics, that a major share of this amount is in fact allocated to realizations which have not much to do with the protection of the environment.

In 1992 a further restructuring reflecting environmental concerns occurred through the creation of a third Vice Presidency<sup>117</sup> for environmentally sustainable development, which covers the Environment Department, the Agriculture and Natural Resources Department, and Transport and Urban Development<sup>118</sup>. At the same time it was decided to give increased attention to social and resettlement issues and to subdivide the Environment Department into following five Divisions:

- Pollution and Environmental Economics,
- Land, Water and Natural Habitats,
- Social Policy and Resettlement,
- Global Environment Coordination,
- Global Environment Facility Administration.

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<sup>115</sup>. Pages 72 and 97, *The World Bank and the Environment - First Annual Report, Fiscal 1990*, Washington DC, 1990, 102 p.

<sup>116</sup>. *Environment Bulletin - Newsletter of the World Bank Environment Community*, Fall 1991, Vol. 3/3, p. 10.

<sup>117</sup>. The two other Vice Presidencies of the World Bank are:  
- Human Resources Development and Operations  
- Finance and Private Sector Development

<sup>118</sup>. *Environment Bulletin* (World Bank), Winter 1992, Vol. 5/1., p. 2.

This new orientation may be a positive change for the environment. It needs to be placed in the context of an increasingly close IMF/World Bank cooperation. The two bodies are institutionally linked through the ministerial level *Development Committee* which usually meets in April and September<sup>119</sup>. Since the IMF still has no environmental unit at all, this trend might infuse it with a certain degree of environmental awareness. On the other hand, as Kaufmann and Schrijver (1990:16) point out, this closeness has led to 'crossconditionality', i.e. developing countries have to accept the IMF's conditions before they qualify for a World Bank loan. That phenomenon certainly does not ease concerns over the Bretton Wood Institution's environmental impact. On balance, it is really impossible to say at this point whether the rapprochement between the Bank and the IMF is beneficial or detrimental for the protection of the environment, it depends on the consideration which the major donor countries will give to environmental matters.

The World Bank is still involved in projects which are extremely controversial. Probably the most dubious and contested one is the US\$ 5-10 billion Flood Action Plan in Bangladesh (Custers, 1992). The intention is to prevent floods by funnelling the country's three main rivers Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna through approximately 4.000 km of concrete embankments averaging 4.5 to 7.4 meters in height in one of the world's most earthquake-prone areas. Not only do these rivers, which have ferocious currents in some places, constantly change their course, much of the estimated 2.4 billion tons of silt they carry every year washes out into the fields to make Bangladesh one of the most fertile regions in the world. This ancient natural fertilization process would be prevented through concrete walls which would constantly need to be maintained at huge costs. Furthermore, these immense quantities of silt would wreak havoc with this monstrous embankment system, as well as with the ecology of the estuaries.

It is true that floods regularly kill people in Bangladesh, but the cyclonic tidal surges along the coast are more deadly and destructive, yet only a minor portion of this World Bank plan is dedicated to the coastal areas. As Custers points out, this megaproject enjoys the support of Bangladesh's elite because it could obtain numerous benefits from it, such as lucrative construction contracts and a more controllable land management.

The negative environmental and social ramifications of this particular project appear to be of an exceptional magnitude. There is another area for which the Bank is frequently criticized: hydroelectric dams usually necessitate displacements of large numbers of people to whom usually various forms of compensation are promised. In numerous cases, however, these are inadequate, or promises have not been kept. The above-mentioned Volta River Project is a typical example of this (Payer, 1982:262).

The Bank's strategic decisions are theoretically taken by its Board of Governors which is composed of the member countries' delegates, usually the finance ministers. In practice, however, most of the Board's functions have been delegated to the Bank's 22 full-time executive directors (Schechter, 1988:350). The policies made by the executive directors<sup>120</sup> are still sharply contested for environ-

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<sup>119</sup> Page 265, *1992 United Nations Handbook*, published by the Ministry of External Relations and Trade, Wellington, New Zealand, 1992, 295 p.

<sup>120</sup> *1992 United Nations Handbook, op. cit.* (p. 265):

mental reasons, even in the post-Rio period: Probably the world's most controversial hydroelectric scheme is a gigantic project which consists of a series of dams on the Narmada river. The population of India is sharply divided over this grand plan which calls for the construction of a total of over 3000 small, large and very large dams over the next 40 to 50 years (Fineman, 1990:119). At present, the World Bank is mostly involved in the huge 3000 Megawatt Sardar Sarovar dam. An external report written by Bradford Morse, an environmentalist, and Thomas Berger, a Canadian justice, accuses the Bank of bending and ignoring its own directives as well as Indian law concerning the resettlement of indigenous peoples and the environmental impact of the project (Lewis, 1992:29). The Board of the Bank's executive directors, at its October 23, 1992 meeting, was very much divided on the issue. In the end it voted with a 55% majority to continue the construction, and to worry about its impact once it is built.

The low priority given by the Bank's top decision-makers to environmental matters - not to mention social implications - is corroborated by a recent leaked internal investigation headed by W.A. Wapenhans. It concludes that a major portion of the Bank's projects are failing because its organizational culture puts pressure on expediting projects without adequate consideration of the host countries' capacity to implement them, and of the projects' long-term sustainability<sup>121</sup>.

In spite of these and other charges against the World Bank brought forward by many of the major international NGOs and critical journals such as *The Ecologist*, international financing institutions (IFIs)<sup>122</sup> in general and the World Bank in particular are enjoying an increasing support from industrialized countries at the expense of the UN's specialized agencies. The 1991 *Nordic UN Project*<sup>123</sup>, a joint study done by the international development authorities of the governments of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden concludes that there is "a migration of tasks" from the specialized agencies to the World Bank and other IFIs. The Nordic UN Project stresses that there is a need for assistance to developing countries through the specialized agencies in areas such as the environment, population planning, health, education and public administration in general. The authors of this quite unique inter-governmental study come to a conclusion which is very explicit and should be worrying to UNEP:

There is one interesting and important aspect to the IFI's increasing involvement with humanitarian and social aspects of development. While it might represent a departure from their original mandate, it is a departure much supported by the Nordic countries who have consistently supported moves in this direction. Following their success in this endeavour, *there is*

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At 30 June 1992 there are 22 Executive Directors, of whom five are appointed by members having the largest number of shares, the other 17 being elected every two years by the governors of the remaining members.

<sup>121</sup>. Page 259/260, "Lies, Fantasy and Cynicism", Editorial by the editors, *The Ecologist*, November 1992, Vol. 22/6.

<sup>122</sup>. Similar terms are 'multilateral development banks' (MDBs) and 'regional development banks' (RDBs); IFIs and MDBs encompass both the World Bank and non-UN intergovernmental lending institutions such as the Asian Development Bank or the African Development Bank. The term IFIs includes intergovernmental funds which are not considered to be MDBs or RDBs.

<sup>123</sup>. Pages 70-73, *The United Nations in Development - Reform Issues in the Economic and Social Fields, a Nordic Perspective*, Final Report by *the Nordic UN Project*, edited by Ulf Rundin, Stockholm, Almqvist & Wiksell, 1991, 111 p.

*now a risk of the IFIs crowding out the UN agencies from their traditional areas* (italics added). A solution might be to seek a distribution of roles along other lines, with a view of finding complementary roles for the UN agencies and the IFIs (p. 72).

This view of the UN system is unquestionably as much a threat to UNEP as it is to UNDP and the specialized agencies. It supports the conclusions drawn earlier on UNEP's challenge in living up to its coordination mandate: UNEP has been getting new competition in this domain, and the Governing Council's attempt of 'digging in' in Nairobi condemns its aspirations with regard to UN-wide environmental coordination to failure. This task can only be carried out in New York, Geneva or possibly in Washington DC, i.e. where the UN's political and economic decision-making is located. It is not a coincidence that the major international environmental NGOs are largely concentrated in Washington DC, at the doorsteps of the US Congress, the World Bank and the IMF. UNEP's new leadership might enjoy a limited political honeymoon, during which time it may save its coordinating mandate by transferring it closer to where the action is, otherwise this function will be taken over by another organism.

The authors of the Nordic UN Project make it very clear that donor governments trust IFIs more and consider them to be more efficient than the specialized agencies. Developing countries don't like this trend at all because they have a much higher voting power in the latter. On the other hand, there is a positive element in this trend to the extent that the Scandinavian endeavours of sensitizing the World Bank to social and environmental priorities are successful. Can the World Bank be truly reformed? MacNeill et al. (1991:122) consider that "changes are encouraging" but at the same time they point out that only corresponding changes in the Bank's *institutional culture* make a fundamental commitment to sustainable development possible. The theme of its 1992 World Development Report is "Development and the Environment"<sup>124</sup>. Perhaps this is a sign that its institutional culture is indeed changing.

#### 6.1.2. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Environmental Politics

UNDP, like the World Bank and UNEP, is pulled into the current of institutional changes which characterize the post-Rio period. UNDP's main strength are its Field Offices which administer grants in 112 developing countries on behalf of the host nation. It is small compared to the World Bank, or even to the Regional Development Banks, and in many countries bilateral development agencies are far more important, but its representation is wider than any other development agency (Helland-Hansen, 1991:139). Donor countries are committed in principle to UNDP's basic mandate, i.e. to serve as a strong, centrally-funded technical assistance mechanism; in practice, however, multilateral assistance has been suffering a relative decline due to a US-led increase in the emphasis on bilateral aid. This trend is amplified by the fact that UNDP's role is often that of a catalyst and advisor engaged in feasibility studies, technical training, institutional development, and even the search of financial resources. Thacher (1986:148) considers the implications of this relative weakening

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<sup>124</sup>. *World Development Report 1992 - Development and Environment*, New York, Oxford University Press, published for the World Bank, 1992, 308 p.

of the UN's central financing body "ominous", particularly with regard to sustainable resource management.

UNDP has responded to the above-mentioned inclination of the industrialized countries to put more emphasis on efficiency by advocating "... increased use of services from governmental and non-governmental institutions and firms and to make maximum use of national institutions and firms, if available, within the recipient countries<sup>125</sup>". This means that the specialized agencies will have to be more and more competitive with organizations outside the UN system; in view of the heavy burden of the political bureaucracy and decision-making structures which they have to carry this is a tall order for them. At the same time, the Nordic UN Project<sup>126</sup> indicates quite explicitly that more attention to cost efficiency is the only way for them to prevent a further erosion of their domain in favor of the MDBs (p. 90). The Nordics assume that the relation between UNDP and the specialized agencies

must probably increasingly be organized on a contractual basis, with payment for services provided, similar to the World Bank's arrangement with them (p. 57).

Furthermore, they suggest a strategy which UNDP should use to improve its competitive position: it should strengthen its analytical and normative capacities (p. 19). Such an orientation, however, might cause a domain conflict with UNEP because scientific monitoring and assessment of the state of the environment is essentially the task of its *Earthwatch Programme*, UNEP's largest and perhaps most respected component (*viz.* Annex, No. 9).

In any case, UNDP has already embarked on this path: it is involved in scientific monitoring of atmospheric and global climatic change, and of biological diversity<sup>127</sup>. UNEP also takes a very strong interest in these domains, it was crucially involved in the former by steering the climate change negotiations through the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and in the latter by being in charge of organizing negotiations for the convention on biodiversity, both of which were signed at the Rio Conference. The issues of climate change and biodiversity are likely to be among the most important global environmental concerns for the foreseeable future. These issues are both sufficiently vast and complex to "accommodate" both UNEP and UNDP. At the same time, however, the two UN Programs are obviously in direct competition in these two domains which enjoy a relatively high profile in the public eye. It will be interesting to see over the next few years how they manage to share these terrains.

Close cooperation among UNDP, the World Bank and UNEP is not new. The World Bank often serves as the executing agency for UNDP projects<sup>128</sup>. As far as UNEP is concerned, the most important joint programme with UNDP is the UN Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO) which fights desertification in the Sub-Saharan countries from Senegal all the way to Somalia. At the Rio Conference desertification emerged as the biggest environmental concern for the African delegations. UNEP and UNDP contribute each approximately US\$ 1 million to UNSO, mostly for

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<sup>125</sup>. UNDP Governing Council, 22 June 1990, 38th meeting, subject National execution, Item 90/21-4e.

<sup>126</sup>. *The United Nations in Development*, 1991, *op. cit.*

<sup>127</sup>. Page 8, Policy document, UNDP Governing Council, 36th session, New York, 5-30 June 1989, Environment: Trends and Perspectives, Report of the Administrator, 24 p.

<sup>128</sup>. Page 412, *Everyone's United Nations, a Handbook on the Work of the United Nations*, Tenth Edition, New York, United Nations, 1986, 484 p.

technical assistance, whereas bilateral agencies contribute over US\$ 20 million to UNSO. The cooperation between UNDP and UNEP was described as good by two interviewees at UNDP but a third observer used an unquotable term for UNEP's performance in the area of desertification... In any case, it is distressing to consider in this context that global income foregone due to desertification has been estimated by UNEP at US\$ 42 billion<sup>129</sup> per year, it is a process which is very expensive to halt and to redress.

In 1989 UNDP started a new initiative called Sustainable Development Network (SDN) which is really a computerized network of networks. The purpose of the SDN is to facilitate the flow of information related to sustainable development between developing countries and between the countries and IGOs and INGOs. UNDP's emphasis is on identifying national expertise and on cooperation with national governmental and non-governmental institutions<sup>130</sup>. According to interviews at UNDP, UNEP showed little interest in participating in the SDN in the first couple of years. This may be changing now because UNCED's Agenda 21 gives UNDP the main responsibility for capacity-building in sustainable development; it has subsequently launched the programme *Capacity 21*, which incorporates a revived SDN in a strengthened capacity-building effort<sup>131</sup>.

In an analysis of the UN system's sustainable development institutions and policies done for the World Resources Institute (WRI), one of the major INGOs, Kimball (1992:9) defends the need to bolster UNDP's role:

To ensure that the UN capacity-building programs reinforce technical assistance funded by the multilateral development banks and bilateral and private donors, and vice versa, a single agency within the international development community - the United Nations Development Programme - should take the lead in developing and administering long-term capacity-building programs to support environmentally sound development.

Kimball also calls for a coordinating role for UNDP in UN-wide *capacity-building* programs. She would like to see UNDP coordinate the regional offices of all UN bodies in this domain, including explicitly UNEP's (p. 10). That idea might not sit very well with UNEP which takes pride in helping developing countries to set up national departments or ministries for environmental matters. It should be noted here that WRI differs from other INGOs through its close ties with both the World Bank and UNDP. For instance, the former WRI Vice President for Research and Public Policy, Mohamed T. El-Ashry, was named director of the World Bank's Environment Department and chairman of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), which will be discussed below, in 1991. Most recently, former WRI president James Gustave Speth has replaced William H. Draper III as the Administrator of UNDP<sup>132</sup>. One might consider that WRI has been remarkably successful in placing its 'emissaries' in key positions of multilateral development. Consequently, above recommendations have a

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<sup>129</sup>. Page 43, UNEP/GCSS.III/INF.2, 3 December 1991, Plan of Action to Combat Desertification (PACD), Note by the Executive Director.

<sup>130</sup>. Annex 1, UNDP GC Policy Document, June 1990, New York, Environmental Dimensions of Development, Report of the Administrator, 9 p.

<sup>131</sup>. Page 13, *The Independent Sectors' Network* (The Center for Our Common Future, Geneva), No. 20, October 1992.

<sup>132</sup>. "Draper bids Farewell to Colleagues at UN", (no author), *The Earth Times*, June 19-21, 1993, p. 8.

political weight which UNEP cannot ignore. Incidentally, WRI also has close ties with UNEP, for example Dr. Tolba is a member of its board of directors.

UNEP, UNDP and WRI carry out joint projects such as the authoritative bi-annual *World Resources* handbook<sup>133</sup>. These multiple interconnections mean that UNEP needs to manage its interorganizational relationships very carefully. Dr. Tolba is generally given credit for having shown great diplomatic skills in handling these tasks. It will be a major challenge to his successor to measure up to the respect and high profile, which the outgoing executive director has acquired during his four mandates at the helm of UNEP.

As far as the pertinence of WRI's recommendations is concerned, I have argued in the discussion of UNEP's coordinating mandate that environmental coordination should be left to UNEP, provided it manages to transfer this responsibility to New York or Geneva, because it has more of a long-term perspective than UNDP. This also applies to the environmental component of the capacity-building functions. *As long as most UN member countries have separate Environment Ministries and Finance or Development Ministries, it doesn't make much sense to give UNDP, rather than UNEP, the mandate to coordinate and administer environmental capacity-building!* At the same time it is clear that this is another area in which UNEP's and UNDP's domains are overlapping. The two UN bodies have to cooperate with each other in specific domains even though they are competing against each other in many ways. If UNEP is unable to prove to the international community in the near future that it *can* improve its coordinating capacities it will certainly lose this part of its domain.

UNDP is clearly in the process of fortifying and broadening its stature in environmental matters. In the wake of the 1987 Brundtland Report, UNDP has not only been getting more and more interested in environmental matters, it has undertaken to explicitly reconceptualize many of its traditional project sectors as environmental sectors. In an environmental policy document<sup>134</sup> submitted at the UNDP 1990 Governing Council the 'Report of the Administrator' explains that

... the reporting on statistics has been reassessed to include more comprehensively environmental projects of a human living and development planning nature that are being promoted via the UNDP Environmental Management Guidelines.

This "reassessment" (articulated in a somewhat contorted English) includes projects which are "*likely environmental*, in a socio-cultural sense" in areas like education, women in development, and public administration, as well as projects which are "*potentially environmental* in a developmental sense" such as urban management or clean industry and biotechnology (italics added). *Clearly, UNDP goes out of its way to put an environmental spin on every project which might conceivably be amenable to such an exercise.*

This explicit reassessment is precisely the reason why the above-mentioned quadrupling of the World Bank's environment project may not mean much - it may well be largely accounted for by the creative use of statistical reassessment on its

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<sup>133</sup>. *World Resources 1992-93, a Guide to the Global Environment*, A Report by WRI in collaboration with UNEP and UNDP, published by Oxford University Press, New York, 1992, 385 p.

<sup>134</sup>. Page 18, UNDP Governing Council, DP/1990/27, 1 May 1990, Thirty-seventh session, Geneva: POLICY; Environmental Dimensions of Development, Annex III, UNDP's Expanded Definition of Environmental Projects.

part. All of this is an illustration of the earlier conclusion that developmental and environmental policies are more and more converging. UNDP's explicit reassessment certainly makes it very clear that the neat separation between environment and development is a thing of the past. As we have seen already, UNEP has also "reassessed" its activities at the 1991 Governing Council to include development-related aspects much more explicitly than ever before. What we are witnessing here is in fact a redefinition of the domains of UNEP, UNDP and the World Bank. The three institutions are now much more integrated than ever before. *The policy implications of this new constellation are perhaps the most important and immediate challenge UNEP has to face at the beginning of its second phase.* We shall now turn to the new cooperation of these three institutions.

## 6.2. The Creation of the Global Environment Facility (GEF)

The GEF is a joint program of the World Bank, UNDP and UNEP which will be of greatest strategic importance for UNEP's second phase. This new institution has been given the purpose of "assisting developing countries to protect the global environment and to transfer environmentally benign technologies"<sup>135</sup>. It was established in November 1990 as a three year pilot project. Project funds should be committed by mid-1994, although the actual implementation of the projects will take several additional years. The GEF represents in many ways the culmination of a process, which was driven by the 1987 publication of the Brundtland Report, the promotion of the sustainable development concept, and the subsequent rapprochement of the three UN bodies. Its creation originates in a French initiative (backed by Germany) in September 1989 at the joint World Bank - IMF Development Committee. The history of the GEF underlines the above-mentioned influence of the World Resources Institute at the confluence of environment and development: WRI published the 'International Conservation Financing Project Report'<sup>136</sup> in September 1989 which was commissioned by UNDP, and which formed the basis for the negotiations which led to the establishment of the GEF.

A 'related forerunner' (Helland-Hansen, 1991:137) of the GEF is the Multilateral Ozone Fund which was established under the revision of the Montreal Protocol in June 1990 as a joint program of the same three institutions, except that here UNEP was given the responsibility for the treasury. At the same time it is responsible for the political promotion of the objectives of the treaty, whereas UNDP is in charge of feasibility studies, and the World Bank is the administrator of the Fund (Benedick, 1991:186). The cooperation between the World Bank and UNEP with regard to the Ozone Fund is rather strained: Helland-Hansen (p. 138), representing "UNDP's operational understanding of the GEF", comments that "the political intentions are to eventually merge the two funds following the three-year pilot period". The question of this eventual merger is very touchy, it is opposed not only by at least some members of UNEP's staff who complain about the Bank's overbearing attempt to control everything, but also by developing countries who want to see the Fund staying at arm's length from the Bank. The issue is made more complex by the fact

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<sup>135</sup>. Page 15-18, *Global Environment Facility - the Pilot Phase and Beyond*, Working Paper Series Number 1, Washington DC, World Bank, UNDP, UNEP, May 1992, 52 p.

<sup>136</sup>. Natural Endowments: Financing Resource Conservation for Development, International Conservation Financing Project Report, Washington DC, WRI, commissioned by UNDP, September 1989, 32 p.



The Global Environment Facility, whose additional grant and concessional funding is designed to achieve global environmental benefits, should cover the agreed incremental costs of relevant activities under Agenda 21, in particular for developing countries. Therefore, it should be restructured so as to, *inter alia*:

Encourage universal participation;  
*Have sufficient flexibility to expand its scope and coverage* (italics added) to relevant programme areas of Agenda 21 with global environmental benefits, as agreed<sup>141</sup>.

The restructuring of the GEF was one of the most important and most intensely negotiated issues at the Rio Conference. Its functional domain are the following four areas:

- climate change,
- ozone depletion,
- biodiversity,
- international waters.

In addition to the above-mentioned involvement of the GEF in the protocol on ozone depletion, UNCED also gave it the responsibility to serve as the interim conduit for funding the conventions on climate change and biodiversity. Originally the GEF was supposed to serve - (at least in the mind of many of the major donor countries) strictly for *incremental costs*, which developing countries incur in protecting these four aspects of the global environment. The developing countries, however, have always vigorously fought for an expansion of the GEF's mandate. They maintain, that it is impossible to distinguish between global and national environmental concerns, that environmental protection cannot be separated from poverty alleviation, that environmental sectors are interdependent, and that they are entitled to set their own national priorities, just like the industrial countries have always been doing.

The original compartmentalization of the GEF is indeed difficult to defend, for instance biodiversity is greatest in the tropical forests, which also have a fundamental function as carbon sinks in the prevention of climate change. Forests, however, are not specifically included among the GEF's priorities. Furthermore, North-South disputes thwarted a forest convention in Rio, the parties only managed to agree on a loose set of 'Forest Principles' which will hopefully lead to a convention subsequently. The tropical forests, as many developing countries insist, are just as much subject to national jurisdiction as for instance oil reserves or pharmaceutical patents, therefore the rich countries have little legitimacy in imposing conservation measures on them, especially after they have largely cut down their own forests.

UNCED gave the GEF a crucial role in the financing of activities related to Agenda 21 (including desertification), provided it will be "fully restructured"<sup>142</sup>. UNDP is actively pushing for an enlargement of the GEF's domain into areas of human development such as urban degradation, land-based pollution or capacity building<sup>143</sup>.

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<sup>141</sup>. Page 294, *Environmental Policy and Law*, August 1992, Vol. 22/4, Agenda 21, Selected Chapters, Draft Version, Chapter 33 on Financial Resources and Mechanisms, Art. 33.16.a-iii.

<sup>142</sup>. Page 25, *Brundtland Bulletin*, July 1992, Issue 16, "Global Environment Facility".

<sup>143</sup>. Page 83, *UNDP Human Development Report 1992*, New York, published by Oxford University Press, 1992, 215 p.

Another change presently under discussion is the issue of universal membership without membership fee.

At present only about 50 countries are 'participants'. A 'constituency approach' which would divide industrialized and developing countries into equal numbers of groups of delegations is under consideration for the decision-making mechanism at the strategic level<sup>144</sup>. Furthermore, openness toward NGO input and transparency of the negotiating process were consistent demands, especially at the Rio parallel conference 'Global Forum'. In fact, improved possibilities for NGOs from the North and the South to participate in international sustainable development institutions are considered to be one of the main achievements of UNCED; it remains to be seen, to what extent this achievement is applicable to the GEF. Already, the GEF has a budget to finance trip expenses for a limited number of NGO members from developing countries, in order to enable them to take part in negotiations.

The future relationship between the GEF and the earlier discussed Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), and the related issue of the CSD's "teeth" are some of the most complex concerns within the ongoing restructuring process of the GEF. On November 13, 1992, GEF Chairman Mohamed T. El-Ashry was questioned on this issue at the UN General Assembly's Second Committee by the Indian delegate, and he had this to say:

I can give you my personal views and not the GEF's view, because there is no GEF view on that. My own view, having been in the business of environment and development for 23 years and having participated in the preparatory process for UNCED, my thinking about CSD's teeth would be in the context of *monitoring and open reporting* (italics added). Some people may not think that open reporting is enough of a tooth. But just think about that for a moment. The transparency of the process of reporting and publishing is what actually got us here to talk about these issues right now. It is what led to Rio in the first place so I really think that the biggest tooth that the CSD could have is to get reports from governments, from international institutions, from all those who are major players on the front of sustainable development. Analyze them, synthesize them and then publish them<sup>145</sup>.

The real issue here, as El-Ashry made quite clear subsequently, is the question whether the CSD should have some sort of *control* over the GEF. It is not very surprising that the GEF chairman thinks it should have no control over his institution, people heading billion dollar enterprises don't usually like the idea of being controlled. His argument is, that the same member-states which control the CSD also control the GEF, consequently such a control function would only lead to redundant and inefficient bureaucratic empire building and domain conflicts.

I think he is right, in fact his reasoning fits very well with my earlier conclusions, that CSD's burdening with coordinating functions has unfortunately weakened and perhaps jeopardized its monitoring effectiveness. In fact, El-Ashry explicitly accepts the notion that the GEF should report to the CSD on its activities and problems like any other UN institution. What he opposes is the notion that the CSD should "control" the GEF. This would indeed not make sense because, as explained earlier, in the UN context monitoring and coordinating/controlling cannot be

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<sup>144</sup>. Page 11, *Global Environment Facility*, December 1992, *op. cit.*

<sup>145</sup>. Page 6, *Global Environment Facility*, December 1992, *op. cit.*

effectively carried out by the same institution due to the autonomy of sister organizations which have their own legislative bodies and fundraising mechanisms. The CSD can and should monitor the GEF - and it should be given as much as possible a good set of teeth to do that - but in the present institutional constellation it would never be effective in attempts to coordinate, control, or otherwise dominate it!

The very notion that a UN commission would be given the powers to control an organism of which the World Bank is the administrator is unrealistic. An indicative illustration of the Bank's influence in the GEF is the fact that the GEF's Information Disclosure Policy has to be approved by the Board of its executive directors, i.e. the publication of documents on GEF projects is subject to the Bank's blessings<sup>146</sup>.

The GEF, like the World Bank, has come under harsh criticism for the role it plays within the larger context of the UN system, and of the forces of globalization in general. For instance, Tickell and Hildyard (1992:82) write:

Few would deny that these are all areas of major concern (the above-mentioned four sectors of GEF's domain): it is also incontestable that the chief perpetrators of the destruction in all four areas are Northern interests, acting in conjunction with Southern élites. But GEF has not singled out these areas in order to take on the world's dominant élites: rather, it is concerned with securing control of those aspects of the environment - the atmosphere, the seas and biodiversity - that are necessary to the continued throughput of resources in the global economy.

Tickell and Hildyard's conclusion is largely on target, even though it is not quite as incontestable as they maintain. Northern lifestyles are more to be blamed than Northern "interests". In the South, on the other hand, a lifestyle based on large families prevents developing countries from breaking the vicious circle connecting demographic growth, poverty and environmental deterioration. Furthermore, it is not quite clear why the protection of the atmosphere is such a priority for the "throughput of resources". Be that as it may, closing down the GEF, or the UN, would make matters worse. It would leave international environmental affairs even more vulnerable to transnational corporations (and to small firms, which don't necessarily have a better record in environmental and social matters). What is needed is not a disengagement from global governance but on the contrary the forceful implementation of sustainable development practices based on international cooperation and solidarity.

The GEF's policy makers are treading a thin line between two perspectives which are very difficult to reconcile: On one hand they have to take into consideration in a comprehensive approach the very often desperate situation of developing countries, which insist on linking global environmental measures with national priorities. This is the only way to obtain their participation and cooperation. On the other hand they have to maintain the profile of the GEF as a globally oriented environmental protection agency as its *raison-d'être*, because the donor countries are already funding bilateral and multilateral development agencies and would balk at funding a new such institution, even if it has an environmental slant<sup>147</sup>.

What are the GEF's chances of living up to this challenge? Maybe it would be impossible for a single institution to be able to bridge these opposing demands. The

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<sup>146</sup>. Page 6, *The Independent Sectors' Network*, October 1992, Number 20.

<sup>147</sup>. This is essentially the synthesis of a meeting on strategic issues of the GEF, prepared by Charles Barber in consultation with Robert Repetto, both from WRI; annexed to *Global Environment Facility*, December 1992, *op. cit.*

GEF, however, benefits from UNEP's universally recognized reputation as the UN's environmental consciousness, from UNDP's technical assistance expertise rooted in cooperation with well over a hundred host countries in the South, and finally from the World Bank's prestige among the major donor countries as an efficient financial mechanism. With these assets, and a widespread goodwill and good intentions for restructuring its domain as well as its decision-making process following the UNCED negotiations, the GEF presently has a good chance of rising to the challenge as well as may be expected realistically.

The GEF's present budget projections for the 1994-97 period are in the US\$ 2.5-4 billion range<sup>148</sup>. At the same time, the International Development Association (IDA), the World Bank's "window" for concessional lending, which is another key channel for Agenda 21 funding, reached on December 15, 1992, its goal of US\$ 18 billion for its tenth three-year replenishment, which starts in July 1993. These soft loans are considered to be part of the environmental 'additionalities' which are crucial for the implementation of the Rio Conference's decision. During the replenishment process the donor country delegates stressed the importance of cooperation with NGOs and insisted "that information of the environmental impacts of IDA projects be made readily available"<sup>149</sup>.

*As far as UNEP is concerned, it is certainly a remarkable achievement that it managed to propel itself from the status of a respected but small US\$ 40 million organization which it was just three years ago into the top league of IGOs, right beside the World Bank and UNDP.* Even if it is understood by everyone in the field that UNEP is clearly the junior partner in this joint venture, and that it constantly needs to struggle to get its point across, its inclusion in the GEF has arguably bolstered its institutional profile in the UN system. This achievement is surely due at least to some extent to Dr. Tolba's strategic vision, and to his capacity to implement it with diplomatic 'Fingerspitzengefühl' (sensitivity). As the GEF will evolve over the next few years, it will be one of UNEP's main tasks at the beginning of its second phase to fulfil its role within it to the satisfaction of a very diverse and demanding clientele.

### 6.3. Domain Competition and the Need to Cooperate

Several interviewees expressed the feeling that UNEP should put more emphasis on cooperation and less on its coordination efforts. Within the GEF, UNEP as the 'junior partner' has no choice anyhow but to collaborate as best as it can with its much bigger sister organizations. It is true that UNEP does have some strategic assets which the World Bank and UNDP appreciate in order to give the GEF the required environmental image in the donor countries for fund raising purposes. UNEP's profile and goodwill as the UN's environmental consciousness is a very valuable asset for the GEF in this regard. Oliver (1990:256) comments as follows on this kind of arrangement:

Organizations that project the appearance of rationalized activity and cooperation through joint program activity often are able to mobilize more

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<sup>148</sup>. Page 8, *Global Environment Facility*, December 1992, *op. cit.*

<sup>149</sup>. *Brundtland Bulletin*, December 1992, Issue 18, p. 24.

funding and authority to provide services in a specific domain than are autonomous organizations.

Oliver's observation is certainly very fitting for the GEF - one may even go as far as saying that mobilizing funds, and projecting a more powerful authority in the specific domain of *global* environmental problems than any of the three institutions could ever muster are its *raison d'être*. Her mentioning of the appearance of rationalized activity fits very well with the World Bank's dominating role in the GEF, and with the earlier mentioned greater confidence that the industrialized countries have in multilateral development banks than in the specialized agencies.

No matter, however, how valuable UNEP may be for the objectives of the World Bank and of UNDP, it is not irreplaceable. In fact, it has been "replaced" by the World Resources Institute in the case of the Tropical Forest Action Plan which is a major joint program between the World Bank, FAO, UNDP and WRI. It had a budget of US\$ 5.3 billion for the 5-year period of 1987-1991<sup>150</sup>.

A cooperative spirit among all three partners is crucial to make the GEF a viable and successful initiative. Much is at stake here in view of the heavy responsibilities placed on the GEF in the wake of the Rio Conference. It is not clear at present, whether the GEF will continue as the financing mechanism for the climate change and biodiversity conventions, and its implication in the financing of projects governed by Agenda 21 is still quite vague also. What is clear, however, is that on one hand the North is very much opposed to the creation of new multilateral funding bodies, and that on the other hand the South is insisting on more transparent and democratic decision-making processes and structures. But the fate of the North and the South are so much inter-linked now that they are forced to interact more and more. Global environmental problems have become such a universal threat that a really serious cooperation throughout the UN is absolutely imperative.

In spite of these general observations on the need to cooperate which would presumably be supported by everybody involved in the GEF, it is clear that the three organizations are at the same time competing against each other in different ways. As we have seen already, there is always competition in the UN system for control and influence. At the same time, as billions of dollars became available for environmental projects, programs and conventions, competition for these funds heated up, especially in a recessionary context when funding for IGOs is frozen or curtailed in many areas. *The time when the environment was a marginal "non-political" issue receiving marginal funding through a little program in Nairobi is over.*

UNDP's above-mentioned "reassessment" of projects to classify as many as possible of them under the banner of the environment is a striking example of this competitive spirit. UNESCO is another example in this regard. As de Senarclens (1988:196) points out, UNESCO has always had a problem with a vague definition of its domain:

Ne disposant d'aucune sphère de compétence précise dans la définition d'une <<problématique mondiale>> - qui est spécialiste d'un domaine aussi vaste? - sans la moindre directive intellectuelle, le secrétariat dut affronter, perplexe, une mission impossible et fut ainsi acculé aux inévitables mouve-

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<sup>150</sup> Page 32, *The Tropical Forestry Action Plan*, prepared by FAO in cooperation with WRI, the World Bank and UNDP, Rome, 1987, 32 p.

ments de kleptomanie intellectuelle qu'impose le parcours de longs sentiers battus.

The sustainable development concept is the obvious (and over-due!) choice for UNESCO as the guiding principle to give its domain a much-needed sense of coherence. UNESCO's Director-General Dr. Federico Mayor held the Plenary Address at the International Studies Association's 1989 meeting in London, in which he was stressing the value of UNESCO's interdisciplinary network of professionals working in activities related to sustainable development<sup>151</sup>. Much of the speech could have been delivered by Dr. Tolba! It should also be noted in this context that UNESCO - and not UNEP - is the World Meteorological Organization's main partner in the World Climate Programme's Water Sub-programme which studies the influence of climate variations on water resources<sup>152</sup>.

There is clearly a great need for all institutions involved in sustainable development to learn to cooperate and to compete at the same time, i.e. to cooperate on specific issues, programs and projects with organizations which compete for funds and influence in other ways. This need is by no means specific to the UN system. Jorde and Teece (1989) conclude that increased economic pressures combined with the necessity of accumulating large financial resources have forced firms, governments and academia to find new ways of competing and cooperating at the same time. This new constellation has earlier antecedents which Warren (1967:405) called the 'coalitional context'. It refers to a joint venture in which each partner retains its autonomous objectives and structures. Cooperation is done here on an *ad hoc* basis wherever it is possible. If cooperation needs to be institutionalized the restructuring of the cooperating units is kept to the strict minimum. That is precisely the case with the GEF, every effort is made to rely on existing organizational units for its activities; these are mainly UNEP's Clearing House, UNDP's Technical Advisory Division and the World Bank's Environment Department.

Oliver (1990:255) distinguishes joint programs from joint ventures by the feature that they don't necessarily require a separate organization. The GEF, according to this (not very convincing) typology, would probably be somewhere in between because it is a distinct organization but it is, at least for the time being, rather amorphous, the organizational boundaries (Miles, 1980:317) between GEF and its three participating institutions are very fluid. Its conceptualizers at the three participating organizations and at the World Resources Institute, which did the preparatory work, were successful in selling the project to the major donor countries precisely because they could argue convincingly that the creation of a new expensive bureaucracy would be avoided by relying on existing structures.

A crucial feature of joint programs in a competitive environment is *domain similarity* which "refers to the similarity of agencies' services, clients, and output" (Oliver, 1990:255). The concept of domain similarity is of particular importance for the UN context because of the countless domain overlaps among the numerous specialized agencies, programs and other bodies, and because of their even more numerous joint programs. Van de Ven and Walker (1984:601) posit that very similar domains tend to lead to territorial disputes whereas very dissimilar domains make it difficult for institutions to cooperate. They contend that institutions with a moderate

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<sup>151</sup>. "Text of Dr. Frederic Mayor's Plenary Address to the 30th Annual Convention, London, March 31, 1989, *International Studies Newsletter*, September 1989.

<sup>152</sup>. Page 3, Preparatory Committee for UNCED 1992, Preliminary Overview of System-Wide Activities Relevant to the UN General Assembly Resolution 44/228, Advance Copy, 9 March 1991, 60 p.

degree of domain similarity are most likely to have complementary resources. Complementary resources in turn tend to favor good cooperation (Paulson, 1976). As far as the GEF is concerned, one may conclude that the fundamentals for good cooperation are present indeed, the three organizations do have moderately similar domains and their resources and assets are complementary as explained earlier.

Generally speaking, *domain overlap* is an intrinsic and unavoidable feature of the UN system. This is due to the multiple and complex interdependence and interaction of needs, and to the fact that these large organizations have wide sectoral domains such as health or agriculture for reasons of political expediency. Joint programs are the main tool for the management of these overlaps. Yanay (1989:342) sees these overlaps located on a continuum ranging from cooperative to competitive. He suggests that in a context of "dispersed resource distribution" (p. 342) organizations can coexist, in spite of domain overlaps, but that no predictions regarding competition, cooperation or coordination can be made in such a situation. That assertion is very pertinent for the UN system as a whole because the resources in most domains are very inadequate compared to the needs, i.e. "dispersed". Furthermore, it would be very perilous to try to predict where or under which circumstances domain overlap in the UN leads to competition, cooperation or coordination. Too much depends on the countries involved, the 'causal texture' of the organizational environment (Emery and Trist, 1965), the personalities implicated, and the complexities of the specific issues.

The opposite of domain overlap may occur also, there are issues and situations for which nobody has the responsibility, or nobody wants to have it. Kilian (1987:244) speaks of the necessity of avoiding 'negative Kompetenzkonflikte' which may be translated as negative domain overlaps. A sinister example of this is the Chernobyl catastrophe which caught the International Atomic Energy Agency off guard and forced it to develop in a hurry international mechanisms for monitoring nuclear accidents (IAEA used to claim that they were unthinkable), and for notifying governments and IGOs.

UNEP is not the only GEF member which has to compete for funds and influence. The neat line which used to separate the World Bank and UNDP is also becoming more blurred. UNDP used to give grants for technical assistance whereas the Bank gave loans for investment projects. Increasingly, however, the Bank's concessional loans are used for human development projects, and often they are so lenient that they resemble grants. The domains of the two institutions are more and more overlapping. Furthermore, as was pointed out earlier, UNEP is in many ways cooperating *and* competing with the GEF's "silent partner", the World Resources Institute. The same can be said about the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

In view of the United Nations' highly political nature, competition and cooperation among UN bodies need to be realistically embedded in their specific political context. Graham Allison, in his classic treatise *Essence of Decision* (1971) presents three models of institutional decision-making, namely the 'Rational Actor' model, Organization Theory, and the Governmental (Bureaucratic) Politics paradigm. It is intriguing to note how different authors and institutions consciously or unconsciously analyze international environmental affairs by adopting the lenses of these three models in very different ways.

The Rational Actor model is arguably by far the most frequently used perspective, even though institutional studies of course are not adopting any one of the three models in their pure form, they exhibit some aspects of the other models as

well. The Rational Actor model allows to present the issues in more or less detail with intellectual and ethical detachment, and makes it "unnecessary" to spend much time and effort in discussing all the complications, complexities and ramifications inherent in highly politicized issues such as the ones discussed here. Its weakness, of course, is that the conclusions and recommendations obtained this way tend to dodge politically sensitive issues. I would put for instance the treatises by Caldwell (1990) and Kilian (1987), and the more focused analysis by WRI's Kimball (1992) into this category. The Organization Theory model has the objective of generating generalizable organizational insight but it is not much in demand in this field due to its abstract and even more aloof nature, and perhaps even more due to the geographical spread of the institutions involved. Not surprisingly, an example would be a PhD thesis (Le Prestre, 1982). The Governmental Politics model is also quite rare because it either necessitates extensive interviews with the participants in international regimes (Haas, 1990), or it is employed by analysts who are themselves participants in the process (Benedick, 1991; MacNeill et al., 1991; The Nordic UN Project, 1991<sup>153</sup>). The present thesis reflects a combination of the last two models. The literature since Allison's 1971 classic has added a fourth category in the field of international environmental affairs which is comprised of regime theory, and the discussions around the above-mentioned concept of epistemic communities.

One may certainly assert that with the emergence of the GEF as the principal multilateral funding and assistance mechanism in the area of global environmental problems, UNEP is faced with a new competitive constellation. The fact that its 'senior partners' are located in Washington DC and New York may very well pull UNEP closer into the political and financial decision-making process.

The GEF puts UNEP onto a *geopolitical track* which is far removed from the dispersed little projects which have used up a big portion of its resources, time and energy until very recently. Clearly, UNEP is undergoing a major strategic transformation. Is this a first order 'reorientation' or a more fundamental second order 'evolution' (Laughlin, 1991)? Robb (1988:4), borrowing terminology from biology, calls the first order changes *morphostatic*:

Morphostatic changes are those which arise from the workings of the organization within the framework of its received wisdom and view of its existence, within the current definitions of its objectives and of the processes which are appropriate to achieve them.

In contrast, Robb defines second order *morphogenetic* changes as follows:

Morphogenetic changes occur when the model of the organization held in view is questioned, when, as a result of learning and developmental processes, a new model emerges, and when new processes are instituted to achieve the new objectives entailed by the new model.

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<sup>153</sup>. *The United Nations in Development*, 1991, *op. cit.*

UNEP is essentially still occupying the same domain, albeit with some modifications which were applied, as we have seen, especially at the Governing Councils of 1989 and 1991. Consequently, it would be an exaggeration to speak of a morphogenetic change. The changeover from the 'Tolba area' to the new challenges of UNEP's second phase represents a morphostatic change. A morphogenetic change may possibly await it at the end of this phase...

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation of UNEP in its political and organizational context has shown that the heavy emphasis in its mandate on catalyzing and coordinating activities makes it important to look at it not merely as an organization but at the same time to see it as a part - to some extent even the center - of a vast international network. *In the final analysis, it is UNEP's performance as a part of the UN's environmental and sustainable development network which determines its value to the international community.*

#### 7.1. Evaluating UNEP as a 'Linking-Pin' Organization

UNEP epitomizes to a rare degree the kind of organizations with an integrating mandate which Joensson (1986:42) calls 'linking-pin' organizations. These are organizations which

may link third parties to one another, and may actively direct the behavior of other organizations or coalitions.

In spite of UNEP's dependence on other organizations for the implementation of most of its projects, it has managed over the last 20 years to establish itself firmly in its domain and to gain international legitimacy and credibility. It should be recalled that the respect it managed to acquire in the international community, especially in the past few years, is reflected in the fact that its total annual budget (including the voluntary funds) increased from approximately US\$ 40 million to about US\$ 100 million over the last three years. UNEP as an organization has benefitted from the increasing awareness of global environmental threats; at the same time it has also contributed to this awareness through its scientific and educational activities.

As we have seen throughout this analysis, UNEP is very much a sprawling enterprise, its activities are literally spread out all over the earth, they deal with the atmosphere, with the oceans, with terrestrial resources, and with freshwater. Furthermore, UNEP gets more and more involved in economic ramifications of the protection of the environment. Its tentacles touch just about every major sector of international development. Even though its activities are spread thin and in most cases don't reach very deep in terms of institutional involvement, UNEP is now firmly linked to the UN system through its countless joint programs. It started off with a very

unrealistic Action Programme twenty years ago as a result of political compromises, and has largely managed since then to narrow down its domain and to focus its resources on those priorities where it has accumulated most of its expertise. As we have seen, the 1989 Governing Council played an essential role in this regard.

Evaluating an organization such as UNEP, which does not have an operative or implementing mandate, is inherently difficult and judgemental because there are no quantifiable results or services which can be measured (Kilian, 1987:382). UNEP may well point to its involvement in international environmental achievements, such as the conventions on regional seas, ozone depletion, toxic transports, and endangered animals and plants; the fact is that it didn't create any of these regimes alone and it is very difficult to establish its role and its merit in them. The same is true for example in the assistance it provides to developing countries in the establishment of environmental services and infrastructures.

The problems with the evaluation of an organization of such complexity and intersectoral nature are manifold. It would be extremely difficult to arrive at a complete overview which would allow an assessment that does justice to the various units and individuals; nobody, not even the staff of UNEP, can possibly know the degree of excellence of all its activities. In fact, evaluating an institution which depends so much on its linkages with its organizational environment is very different from the evaluation of more traditional and autonomous programs and institutions. This is where the value of Rossi and Freeman's (1985:99) concept of 'reputability assessment' becomes evident: interviews with qualified, well-informed observers, whom the authors call relevant stakeholders, are a crucial ingredient in arriving at a comprehensive judgement, even though their accounts may be conflicting, or they may be colored by specific biases. As in every evaluation, it is the task of the analyst to use his or her judgment in evaluating conflicting perceptions.

A general impression of the interviews is that the staff of the operational units of cooperating and supporting institutions tends to be rather critical of UNEP, because the professionals working there are constantly exposed to the enormity of environmental problems, and they tend to focus on the often entirely inadequate efforts directed at their resolution - but that doesn't necessarily mean UNEP is at fault, given its funding and its mandate. On the other hand, the administrators in central units usually have a more positive view of UNEP, because they tend to realize better, from their own experience with similar constraints and problems, what UNEP's limited alternatives are.

Since UNEP's activities are very much scattered and varied, it is necessary to divide them up for analytical purposes into categories. UNEP's own classification into activities pertaining to 'assessment', 'management' (which includes all functional environmental sectors), and 'supporting measures' is not very helpful because the terms management and supporting measures are too vague. The four categories consisting of the four "c"s have been found preferable as analytical concepts for a synthetic evaluation: *compiling*, assessing and disseminating scientific information, *convincing* the world community of the necessity to take active measures to protect the environment, *catalyzing* specific programs, projects and agreements, and *coordinating* international environmental policies. Many interviewees questioned on this analytical breakdown of UNEP's activities confirmed that this is indeed a useful and pertinent approach.

The 'Earthwatch Programme' (Appendix No. 9) is UNEP's principal effort in *compiling* and disseminating scientific environmental data and information. The scientific community generally gives UNEP high marks for this function, especially for

the Global Environmental Monitoring System (GEMS) and the International Register of Potentially Toxic Chemicals (IRPTC). There is an urgent need, however, to create a UN-related early warning system. Earthwatch would be the appropriate institutional home for such a monitoring function which should also include environmental problems with security implications. Another very urgent need, which according to a major publication of the World Bank, as mentioned earlier, has been completely neglected by the UN system, are scientific studies of the long-term effects of the Green Revolution<sup>154</sup> - here again the Earthwatch program should be given a specific mandate with adequate funding.

In its *convincing* function UNEP assumes its mandate of acting as the UN's environmental conscience. Throughout the UN system, UNEP is generally credited with having done a great deal to increase environmental awareness, and Dr. Tolba's very forceful environmental advocacy unquestionably deserves major credit here. The cooperation with UNESCO on environmental education seems to work well. Generally speaking, one may say UNEP does good "convincing" work.

Its *catalyzing* function is also viewed positively within the constraints of its limited budget by most observers. Even when UNEP's seed money is relatively modest it can be highly helpful to the specialized agencies, as in the case of integrated pest control with FAO. Its technical assistance also fulfils a great need, even though its funding capacity is very inadequate, especially in the case of the fight against desertification in conjunction with UNDP.

UNEP's international law unit deserves some special consideration here in view of the quickly increasing importance and complexity of international environmental agreements. The principal legal expert is Dr. Ivona Rummel-Bulska who is alone in this unit except for contractual assistants and international lawyers on loan from member countries. The legal office "fell by the wayside", as a veteran observer expressed himself, because the 109 point Action Plan at the 1972 Stockholm had to please everybody which made a reasonable prioritization impossible.

Surprisingly, UNEP still has not managed to adequately correct this important gap with the result that one of the negotiators on ozone depletion considered in an interview that UNEP does not provide much leadership in this crucial area except for Dr. Tolba's rhetoric. If UNEP had more staff in this area it would be in a much better position to assist the delegations, for example by furnishing draft documents for the negotiations.

It is remarkable that in spite of the incomprehensibly small size of UNEP's legal department, it does manage to get considerable recognition. For example, Peter Sand (1991:252) credits UNEP with being one of the most prolific makers of 'soft-law', i.e. agreements which are not technically binding but which are largely respected as if they were law. This can presumably be interpreted as quite a compliment for the "one-woman show" of UNEP's law unit!

Soft-law arrangements can be negotiated and implemented relatively fast since they do not need national ratification. At the same time, however, Sand warns that they may also be ignored with impunity because they are not binding. On the whole, notwithstanding the above comment, there seems to be a consensus that UNEP has failed to play a major role in the creation of international environmental law (Soroos, 1992:5), and that its treaty secretariats should be given more funds and greater authority to provide good advice and technical resources for the

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<sup>154</sup>. "Long-term Agricultural Trials", *World Development Report - Development and the Environment*, New York, Published for the World Bank by Oxford University Press, 1992, page 138.

implementation of negotiated commitments (Kimball, 1992:10; Holdgate, 1992:19). *UNEP needs to give much more substantial support to the development of legal instruments if it wants to maintain its credibility in the post-Rio era!* International environmental regimes in areas such as climate change, ozone depletion, the oceans and fishstocks, clean water, desertification, forest preservation, toxic and radioactive transports or biodiversity in flora and fauna are presently a far higher priority in international relations than they ever were.

The US Department of State has published a study on UNEP (Drake, 1987) with the purpose of evaluating its usefulness to US interests. Drake's conclusions in the areas of compiling, convincing and catalyzing are as follows (p. vi):

UNEP's catalytic and integrative activities provide 11 general benefits to the US government and numerous specific benefits to federal agencies. Overall, UNEP fulfils a broad US policy interest by providing a unique forum that enables the United States to promote its environmental interests abroad - in both developing and developed countries, in the East as well as the West.

Unfortunately, after good marks on the whole in the first three categories, it seems clear that just about all observers gave UNEP an 'F' grade in the last 'c', i.e. in *coordination*. Hardly anybody outside the Nairobi secretariat considered UNEP's System-Wide Medium-Term Environment Plan (SWMTEP), which is supposed to be *the* UN-wide blueprint for environmental coordination, as effective. In fact, it seems to be largely ignored by the other UN bodies. At best, UNEP is said to have "a tough selling job" with it. Given the autonomy of the specialized agencies and the unwillingness or inability of the major member countries to coordinate environmental policy among their ministries, environmental coordination at the UN would be difficult under the best circumstances.

In the area of coordination, UNEP has a tendency to make a very onerous task even more formidable. The Nairobi venue, as we have discussed at length, does not help. UNEP made things worse by a counterproductive concentration of its decisions at the Headquarters, for instance in the case of the Mediterranean Action Plan which according to several observers suffered significantly due to its transfer from Geneva to Nairobi. UNEP has also been repeatedly criticized for violating the sensitivities of its cooperating agencies, for example by claiming too much credit for joint programs.

SWMTEP simply lists the cooperating agencies and describes the joint ventures without any indication of the relative importance of each venture. For instance, somebody who doesn't know that most of UNEP's cooperation on desertification occurs via UNSO would have no way of telling so from the numerous joint activities listed in that field<sup>155</sup>. On the other hand, when mentioning the Tropical Forest Action Plan<sup>156</sup> UNEP fails to indicate that it is only marginally involved in it; the main agencies are FAO, the World Bank, UNDP and WRI. Obviously, this sometimes callous attitude is not helpful in UNEP's efforts at coordination and cooperation.

The Nairobi location has presumably had a certain success in convincing the developing countries that global environmental change is not just a problem for the rich countries. However, delegates from the South still often complain that UNEP

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<sup>155</sup> Page 34, *The United Nations System-Wide Medium-Term Environment Programme 1990-1995*, Nairobi, 1988, 103 p.

<sup>156</sup> Page 36, *idem*.

defends Northern interests, and that they are lacking the financial, scientific and technological means to take part in its decisions. In all fairness to UNEP, it should be pointed out, however, that it sometimes finds itself squeezed in a very uncomfortable predicament between the social priorities of the South and the stringent austerity measures imposed by the IMF's Structural Adjustment Program. As we have seen, the 1989 Governing Council has vigorously defended debt relief and the need for additional funding for environmental projects.

The tremendous influence of UNEP's executive director Dr. Tolba on the fate of the organization during the last 16 years has been commented upon; two recent studies have corroborated my assessment of UNEP's agency head. Kirwin (1992:69) maintains that Dr. Tolba delegated the authority to carry out his orders to a small circle of trusted associates, but he did not delegate decision-making powers. He quotes Jerry O'Dell, a recently retired UNEP department head as follows:

He's a victim of his own success. He has great charm and a brilliant mind, but he has to be in control of everything and that has killed the initiative and enthusiasm of a lot of people who have worked here over the years.

As a matter of fact, when I interviewed Jerry O'Dell in December 1988 in Nairobi he clearly gave me the impression of enjoying his work and his easy access to the boss, yet of knowing very well that other senior officials did not appreciate Dr. Tolba's leadership style at all. Another study on UNEP done by the consulting firm Coopers & Lybrand<sup>157</sup> for UNEP notes - in spite of a generally very flattering assessment of the UNEP chief - that "Dr. Tolba has been reluctant to relinquish his substantive commitment to the practical running of UNEP, often down to the smallest detail".

There is no question that international environmental issues have needed a forceful and dynamic promotion not only at the UN, but beyond it in the media and in diplomatic circles. In retrospect, Dr. Tolba was the right man to fulfil this very demanding role. He may take credit for having been able to find in most circumstances the delicate balance between a strong leadership role and diplomatic sensitivity. At the same time, it is also very fitting that he takes his retirement after the Rio Conference because many things have changed in UNEP's domain, and this is the moment for a new leadership to take over the reins.

Arguably UNEP's most innovative and strategically significant initiative has been its decision to join the World Bank and UNDP in 1990 to create the Global Environment Facility (GEF) which was discussed extensively. *I consider it to be UNEP's biggest achievement that it managed to become associated with the World Bank and UNDP in the formation of this very influential new organism which will have a crucial responsibility in reconciling the interests and priorities of the North and the South in the management of the global commons.*

At the 1991 Governing Council the following year, this venture was supported by a request to the executive director to put more emphasis on economic aspects. This policy decision broadens UNEP's domain explicitly from the protection of the environment to include sustainable development and thereby confirmed the *convergence* of environmental and developmental issues. This UN-wide orientation was consecrated in UNCED's Agenda 21 and in the 'Rio Declaration'. Regrettably, in

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<sup>157</sup> Page 21, Executive Summary, Coopers & Lybrand (London Office): a Management and Organization Study of UNEP, advance copy of January 13, 1992, 50 p.

spite of its increasing interest in economic matters, UNEP has still not managed to make a significant contribution towards a systematic use of accounting and statistical practices in the UN system which integrate the environmental costs of economic activities (Kirwin, 1992:70).

The end of UNEP's first phase is characterized by a strengthening of its presence at the center of multilateral decision-making in the field of sustainable development in the wake of the 1987 publication of the Brundtland Report. This trend was strongly advocated in the preceding discussion of UNEP's coordinating role. The two above-mentioned recent studies on UNEP strongly support the interpretation of the institutional and policy evolution in the field of international environmental affairs as it is presented here, validating thereby the strategic underpinnings of the thesis.

Kirwin (1992:69) points out that many observers consider that inter-agency coordination is hindered by Nairobi's isolation, especially the cooperation with New York-based UNDP. In fact, the US, as well as several European and Latin American countries are trying to move those UNEP units which rely particularly heavily on telecommunications such as UNEP's scientific monitoring and dissemination organs to Europe<sup>158</sup>. Most other developing countries, however, insist that these services remain in Nairobi. Kirwin quotes the US attaché to UNEP, Chris Atchley as follows: "People will deny it, but this (the Nairobi location) has been a big problem in coordinating projects, especially with UNDP". The Coopers & Lybrand study in the same vein (p. 15) considers that UNEP's beefing up of its Washington DC liaison office doesn't go far enough: "We feel there is a powerful case for carrying this process still further and for substantially strengthening UNEP's GEF-related capabilities wherever this is necessary". Furthermore, they consider that UNEP should intensify its cooperation with UNDP, especially at the country level where UNDP is far better represented. Regarding UNEP's New York liaison office they have this to say (p. 15):

We recommend a strengthening of UNEP's New York office in order to fulfil new substantive tasks in the field of UNEP-UNDP joint programming, as well as for the purpose of increasing UNEP's contacts with other cooperating or supporting organizations based in New York or elsewhere in North America.

Clearly, the conclusions reached by Kirwin and by the Coopers & Lybrand consultants are absolutely congruent with the analysis and recommendations presented earlier in this thesis. The implementation of these changes would seem to be quite feasible. In conclusion, *the United Nations Environment Programme can be very satisfied with its first twenty years; its ultimate challenge at the beginning of its second phase is to continue its successful activities and to move closer toward the political and economic decision-making centers of multilateral development. At the same time, however, it needs to maintain and strengthen the support of the developing countries.*

At the beginning of December 1992 the General Assembly approved the Secretary-General's appointment of Ms. Elizabeth Dowdeswell of Canada as UNEP's new executive director as of January 1993. As is usually the case in the UN's high-level nominations, the Secretary-General's role is rather limited, the selection is really

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<sup>158</sup>. This applies particularly to the Global Environmental Monitoring System (GEMS), the Global Resource Information Database (GRID), and Inforterra, which are all part of the Earthwatch Programme (*viz.* Appendix No. 9).

made in secret negotiations between coalitions of member countries. Ms. Dowdeswell has previously served as an assistant deputy minister at Environment Canada and as head of Canada's Atmospheric Environment Service. Thus she has gained experience which is precious for this position as Canada's principal delegate to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and she was co-chair of the working group on 'Mechanisms' in the negotiations leading to the Framework Convention on Climate Change which was signed at the Rio Conference<sup>159</sup>.

## 7.2. Contributions of the Thesis

Contrary to the cases of the World Bank, UNESCO or FAO, there is no comprehensive study of UNEP available which would be helpful in analyzing UNEP. Kilian's (1987) monograph in German on the protection of the environment through international organizations might have served that purpose, but as I argued in a review of this book (Thomas, 1990:482), it is unfortunately rather useless for evaluative purposes: "UNEP's critical evaluation is largely based on a couple of articles (which at the time of the book's publication were nine years old), and on self-serving claims in UNEP's Annual Reports". Consequently, the principal contribution of the thesis consists in the first independent in depth evaluation of UNEP; at the same time, it is also one of the earliest post-Rio analyses of international environmental policies and institutions in a wider sense.

There is in general very little research available on empirical investigations of the *effectiveness* of international cooperation for the protection of natural resources. Wettestad and Andresen (1991) of the Fridtjof Nansen Institute in Lysaker, Norway, which is very renowned in this field, have done a number of such studies. Their aim is "... to come up with explicit assessments of the effectiveness of (international) cooperation efforts, something which is *very rare in existing literature* (italics added) (p. 4)".

Citing what they consider the most interesting completed comprehensive effort in this field (namely Kay and Jacobson, 1983), they point out that "evaluating the effectiveness of environmental protection activities of international organizations is <<extraordinarily complex>>" (p. 1). One of the purposes of the thesis is to provide a case study of such an interorganizational and international cooperation effort.

The complexity of this task required a *crossdisciplinary approach*. The principal theoretical contribution of the thesis lies in the development and application of an innovative cross-disciplinary epistemological framework as presented in the table at the end of the introduction. We shall now look at the contributions of this research to these subdisciplines.

### *Program Evaluation/Evaluation Research:*

The literature on program evaluation has furnished the leitmotif for the thesis, i.e. the concept of the *organizational domain*. The definition of its domain is a delicate task for any institution which is embedded in an explicit organizational network. It becomes particularly challenging and interesting in times of strategic change. The multilateral policies negotiated before and during the Rio Conference, and the subsequent retirement of the very powerful leader are forcing UNEP to redefine its

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<sup>159</sup>. *Brundtland Bulletin*, December 1992, Issue 18, p. 20.

domain very carefully in a newly competitive context. The confluence of important events and trends at the United Nations have necessitated an innovative application of the domain concept in evaluation research. The use of the domain concept in the analysis of an IGO per se is not particularly original, but linking the IGO and program evaluation literatures is. This research has shown the usefulness and pertinence of the domain concept in an interorganizational and international context.

UNEP's success in redefining its domain showed us how it emerged and matured as an institution. It furthermore allowed us to show how cooperation, competition and coordination are overlapping in new ways which are brought about by the convergence of environmental and developmental issues throughout the UN and beyond. At the same time it made apparent UNEP's strengths and weaknesses.

The methodological approach used here can be applied to other institutions which are characterized by extensive exchanges with their organizational environment. Milestones in UNEP's evolution such as the narrowing down of its priorities, its failure to control initiatives within its purview like the World Commission on Environment and Development or the UNCED process, and its engagement in a strategic joint venture with larger and financially much more powerful institutions can all be observed in other institutions. It would be very interesting to investigate the generalizability of these observations through a comparative institutional analysis using the technique of reputability assessment as it was employed here.

#### *Organization Theory.*

As we have seen in the chapter on theory, all six of Mintzberg's (1979) structural configurations were found to be pertinent for UNEP in varying degrees due to the complexity of its domain. In the organizational form which Mintzberg (1979:431) calls Adhocracy, coordination is achieved mostly through mutual adjustment. When liaison positions, task forces and standing committees are not sufficient - in the case of UNEP these would be mostly CIDIE and DOEM - then a specific individual needs to be given the task of focusing on the coordinating task. Mintzberg calls unit managers in charge of linking diverse and organizationally dispersed elements 'integrating managers'. An example of such a position is Dr. Iwona RummelBulska, the above-mentioned head of the Environmental Law Unit. Her task is to facilitate and support the negotiation of international agreements in very diverse sectors such as the ozone layer, biodiversity, climate change, hazardous waste and the oceans. As Mintzberg points out, the integrating manager's main power is the power of persuasion. This is particularly true in the UN context, where nobody can impose regulations on sovereign governments or autonomous specialized agencies. The importance of integrating pollution control measures in situations where more than one sector is affected is discussed by Irwin (1989)<sup>160</sup>.

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<sup>160</sup>. The importance of integrating pollution control measures in situations where more than one sector is affected is discussed by Irwin (1989). Although Frances Irwin is not an organizational theorist but a senior associate at the Washington-based Conservation Foundation it is remarkable that her reasoning is very close to Mintzberg's. Such a close unison between a theoretician and a practitioner is rare and should be encouraged since the hallmark of a good theory in the social sciences is its pertinence for practical application. She notes five reasons for integrating environmental laws and institutions (p. 258):

- pollution problems need to be prevented, rather than shifted into another sector;
- a systems approach to pollution emanating from a given facility is more effective than a sector-by-sector approach;

Mintzberg's (1979:357) observations regarding the *decentralized nature of professional bureaucracies* is of particular importance to UNEP and to the conclusions of this study. He emphasizes the autonomy of professionals who have strong links with their professional associations; furthermore, he notes that "a great deal of the power over the operating work rests at the bottom of the structure, with the professionals of the operating core". This bottom-up flow of initiatives is indeed applicable to UNEP. Proposals for projects usually are generated at the professional levels through 'thematic joint programming', and only later on they are negotiated more formally higher up in the hierarchy among the cooperating agencies at the committee of the Designated Officials on Environmental Matters and the Administrative Committee on Coordination. Thus Mintzberg provides a theoretical explanation for our earlier observation that the highly centralized management style of UNEP is not appropriate for professionals who constantly work with colleagues in other agencies, and often in different disciplines.

#### *Intergovernmental Organizations:*

The nature of IGOs varies according to their task environment, sometimes they represent a *forum* for national delegations for negotiation purposes, sometimes they are endowed by their creators with a "legal personality" which enables them to conclude agreements with other IGOs or governments and thereby to assume the role of international *actors* in their own right (Ceres, 1986:82). In the domain of international environmental affairs, Young (1989:236) stresses the need for IGOs to become respected as *independent variables* in regime negotiations. This comment corroborates our earlier observations about the autonomy and the important role of IGO secretariats.

Young mentions as a "particularly striking" example of such a proactive role the leadership exerted by Dr. Tolba in the 1985 and 1987 negotiations on ozone depletion (p. 235). The 1987 Montreal Protocol (Annex No. 1) was indeed a watershed in the negotiation of environmental regimes because for the first time governments accepted commitments to reduce polluting emissions based on the *precautionary principle*, i.e. they considered an immediate economic sacrifice as necessary, in spite of the fact that the evidence of future ecological damages was at that time weakened by a substantial amount of scientific uncertainty.

Even though secretariats of conventions and other IGOs are governed by their member states, these bodies do develop their own internal dynamic and may thus influence negotiations. We have seen a typical example of this process in the draft documents UNEP prepares for the Governing Council. Given the increasing urgency of negotiating international environmental regimes in many sectors, it is certainly to be hoped that IGOs will more and more be able to take on a prominent role.

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- integration allows a better setting of priorities and of comparing different risks to each other;
  - this is the only way to bring policies in other sectors such as energy, transports or urbanization into line with environmental policies;
  - it permits administrative systems to be simplified as compared for example to the fragmented structure found at EPA, which is hampered by its statutory budgeting rigidities.

*International Environmental Affairs:*

Let us conclude this section by returning to Ness and Brechin's (1988:262) "research question for international organization" which they have presented as a challenge for research without attempting to suggest an answer:

It should not be forgotten, however, that the creation of UNEP involved a storm of economic conflict between the more and less developed countries of the world. The extent to which this conflict is fuelled or dampened by the technology of international environmental monitoring and management represents, at the very least, an important research question for international organization.

It is clear that their call for a study of organizational phenomena of IGOs is very pertinent. Their research question intended to stimulate investigations of international environmental organizations is at the very heart of this research on UNEP: Has the globalization of environmental affairs led to a rapprochement of the North and the South?

The answer to this question lies in the phenomenon of the convergence of environmental and developmental policies which was discussed at length. This policy convergence, which was at the center of UNEP's 1991 Governing Council and of the Rio Conference, clearly shows the direction of negotiations and trends in multilateral aid policies. In this sense one can certainly conclude that some progress has been made since 1972, at least at the institutional level, not only at the UN but also at the governmental level both in the North and the South. There is no doubt that the environment has indeed been "a force for greater international integration (Ness and Brechin, 1988:262)".

It is not possible, however, to assert in absolute terms whether the North-South conflict is being fuelled or dampened by global environmental monitoring and management. Monitoring and management will not narrow down the North-South gap. *It all depends to what extent developing countries will be assisted in implementing sustainable development practices*, and to what extent they feel that industrialized countries are making environmental efforts on their part, especially in a reduction of energy consumption! It is presently not clear yet how much supplementary funding the industrial countries will attach to their official development assistance for environmental "additionality" but it is very evident that it will be far less than the developing countries expected at the Rio Conference<sup>161</sup>. At the end of this event, Runnalls (1992a:3) presented a judgment on its outcome in the *Earth Summit Times* which I consider as particularly perspicacious:

The Summit has not produced the \$10 billion hoped for by the Brundtland Commission, and this must count as a major disappointment. It has, however, elevated the environment to a significant place on the international political

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<sup>161</sup>. *New York Time*, June 15, 1992, p. A8:

Maurice Strong, the conference organizer, estimated today that the donor nations announced \$6 billion to \$8 billion in aid to third world environmental projects here. But environmentalists estimated that the new part of this aid was only \$2 billion.

and economic agenda. It has become one of the chips that the major players push around at the negotiating table.

... it is clear that the developing countries are very frustrated at the state of the financial discussions.

In 10 years time, the world may remember the Rio Summit more for the reemergence of the Group of 77 as a real force to be reckoned with than as an event which produced the cash to do the job.

In spite of this financial letdown, environmental "conditionalities" are becoming increasingly important in aid packages. On balance, I would say that North-South tensions and problems with the East will increase, rather than decrease, unless assistance for sustainable development becomes more substantial, as well as better planned, implemented and followed up upon. It is another question, however, - which goes beyond this research - whether advances in regime building have been or will be overpowered by the combined pressures of consumption patterns, agricultural practices, industrialization, and population growth.

In conclusion, the contribution of the thesis lies in the demonstration that a pertinent evaluation of UNEP requires a superposition of two levels of analysis: on one hand there is the view of UNEP as the linch-pin of a network occupying a more and more competitive domain, and on the other hand there is the paradigm of the convergence of environmental and international development policies. In other words, *in order to evaluate UNEP, one has to investigate institutional, as well as the geopolitical environmental issues in the UN context.* The IGO literature has provided the 'glue' between these two dimensions.

### 7.3. Suggestions for Further Research for an Emerging Epistemic Community

Virtually every major UN organization we have come across in our analysis would be an interesting and worthwhile object for a similar crossdisciplinary interorganizational investigation with an environmental focus. This would certainly be the case for the World Bank, UNDP, the GEF, or for those specialized agencies which become more and more involved in sustainable development issues such as UNESCO, FAO, WMO, or WHO as well as IUCN, the hybrid IGO/INGO, and perhaps WRI. There is a specific and *urgent need* to do more research on the trade-environment relationship and to bring case studies to public scrutiny. The role of GATT is only starting to attract the attention of environmental analysis with a global perspective (excellent examples are Arden-Clarke, 1992; Charnovitz, 1992; von Moltke, 1992). At the same time, for all those organizations, including UNEP, up to date investigations with a more micro-organizational orientation are not available and would be of interest.

Crossdisciplinary analyses may very well involve disciplines and fields which differ from the epistemological framework employed in this thesis, such as other subdisciplines of International Relations Theory like Regime Theory or Development Theory, or subdisciplines like International Political Economy or Natural Resource Accounting. A growing literature in Collaboration Theory focusing on the "negotiated order" (e.g. Gray, 1989) emerging from dynamic organizational interfaces seems particularly promising for analyzing and evaluating institutions belonging to the UN system. The overlap of subdisciplines of Political Science and of Organization Theory represents undoubtedly a very fertile terrain for future research on IGOs!

Haas (1990:52) argues that investigators from different disciplines and fields of expertise investigate not only governments and IGOs but they increasingly also "look at policy-making in terms of such non-systemic variables and actors as ideas, knowledge, beliefs, experts, and scientists". This emerging epistemic community in sustainable development investigates "... the conditions under which behavior may change based upon a new understanding of the causal relationships in the world".

The lengthy negotiations on environmental conventions especially in the fields of climate change, biodiversity, the forests, and to a lesser degree the oceans, were all part of the UNCED process. This whole world-wide intergovernmental process has expanded the awareness that such agreements are becoming more and more an urgent and permanent component of international relations in the widest sense. Over the last few years, this trend has stimulated research interest in *regime building and regime analysis* (e.g. Haggard and Simmons, 1987; List and Rittberger, 1992; Soroos, 1985; Young, 1989a&b, 1990). Nevertheless, research on the effectiveness of international regimes is still "in its infancy" (Young, 1990:342). There is also a need for case studies on the ramifications of such regimes on national sovereignty - some have been done by Soroos (1986).

Benedick's *Ozone Diplomacy* (1991), an analysis of the negotiations on ozone depletion, has quickly become a classic case study on regime formation. There is a need for more case studies along these lines, and for investigations of 'likeminded coalitions' (Osler Hampson, 1989) among the negotiating parties. Last but not least, regime analysis needs to be integrated into the wider context of socio-economic and technological globalization (Reich, 1991).

#### 7.4 Geopolitical Environmental Perspectives

The development of multilateral policies and institutions in international environmental affairs will be shaped to a large extent through the balance between *additionality* and *conditionality* (Caldwell, 1990:199), as it is reflected in official development assistance. Developing countries are very suspicious that environmental components of aids packages are imposed on them at the expense of their own national priorities and sovereignty. That explains why the editors of *The Ecologist* perceive the effects of the phenomenon of globalization very harshly as follows:

The "global environment" thus emerges as a principal weapon for the North to gain world-wide access to natural resources and raw materials on the one hand, and, on the other, to force a world-wide sharing of the environmental costs it has generated whilst it retains a monopoly on the benefits reaped from the destruction<sup>162</sup>.

The developing countries' expectations and aspirations during the negotiations of the 1970s on a New International Economic Order were unequivocally dashed at the October 1981 North-South Cancun Summit, mostly due to the hard line ideological attitude of the Reagan administration. Furthermore, in spite of a call for automatic funding of multilateral sustainable development agencies in the Brundtland Report, none of the proposed mechanisms have materialized so far. In 1989 Rajiv

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<sup>162</sup> *The Ecologist*, November 1992, Vol. 22/6, "The Greening of Global Reach" (Editorial), pp. 258-59.

Gandhi, then Prime Minister of India, proposed a planet protection fund which would yield US\$ 18 billion per year if the industrial countries would contribute to it 0.1% of their GNP (Starke, 1990:147). The GEF which was established the following year aims in this direction, but it still has a long way to go to reach the objective of 0.1% of GNP. Clearly, the apprehensions of the South are justified, especially since it now has to compete for funds with the Eastern economies in transition. To make matters worse for the poorest of the poor, it is not possible to implement sustainable development policies and practices in developing countries if local élites prevent a more equitable distribution of power and resources (Brown, Flavin and Postel, 1990:20):

Restoring and stabilizing the biological resource base by 2030 depends on a pattern of land ownership and use far more equitable than today's. Much of the degradation now occurring stems from the heavily skewed distribution of land that, along with population growth, pushes poor people into ever more marginal environments. Stewardship requires that people have plots large enough to sustain their families without abusing the land, access to means of using the land productively, and the right to pass it on to their children.

In the North the formation of an environmental consciousness presents a very inconclusive picture. There are positive signs like the 1989 New Year issue of *Time Magazine* which presented Endangered Earth as 'Planet of the Year' instead of its traditional 'Man of the Year'; the Rio Conference received a media coverage which was completely unprecedented for a non-military political event. On the other hand, it is very easy to find evidence of environmental misconduct sanctioned, if not carried out, by respected media. For example, the annual *World Environment Day*, June 5 (Caldwell, 1990:113) which is UNEP's 'birthday', is mostly ignored. Ironically, *La Presse* (Montréal) of June 5, 1989, featured a glowing full-page presentation of a two-seated sports car with over 300 horsepower. One could also mention a call for "stretching out" the deadlines for substituting ozone-destroying CFCs in automotive air conditioners by then General Motors chief executive officer Robert Stempel<sup>163</sup>. It is remarkable that a few weeks later the United States actually accelerated, on a unilateral basis, the CFC phaseout to December 1995 in spite of this pressure from industry lobbies<sup>164</sup>.

At the conclusion of the Rio Conference North-South tensions were exacerbated due to the negative positions taken by the US delegation throughout the negotiations. At the same time, the Europeans were disunited, and the Japanese would not make any commitments about additionalities (Runnalls, 1992b:11). At best, one may consider that the North is now ready to enter into negotiations with the South over those demands of the New International Economic Order project which it refused in Cancun - provided they are wrapped up in a Green package deal!

Many issues remained unresolved after the Rio Conference, for instance the question of a mandatory judiciary. Most environmental treaties leave dispute settlement before the UN's International Court of Justice up to the signatory parties, and these usually refuse to take that option (French, 1992:30).

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<sup>163</sup>. Page 59, *Fortune*, December 30, 1991.

<sup>164</sup>. Page 1, *Earth Words, A Friends of the Earth Publication*, Winter 1992, Vol. 3/4, "Ozone Crisis Reaches New Hights".

Perhaps the most important unresolved issue, at least as far as UNEP's potential future intervention is concerned, is the question of GATT's responsibility in international environmental affairs, and of its decision-making structure:

GATT works on the basis of reciprocal concessions, which means that big and rich countries have all the power<sup>165</sup>.

So far, the GATT has been very disinterested in the environmental implications of free trade (Charnovitz, 1992:222):

The irony is that the GATT Council of the 1990s has been slow to comprehend the connection between free trade instruments and environmental protection, and the reasons why the GATT is viewed in some quarters as being anti-environment. Thus the real threat to the future of the GATT is not hordes of Greens trying to ram (or, more accurately, peek) through GATT's gates. The real threat may be the myopia and dogmatism of some of those inside.

In a discussion paper prepared for UNCED<sup>166</sup>, the GATT secretariat essentially considers that environmental ramifications of free trade are not its concern. The OECD is much further advanced in trying to come to terms with these issues which promise to be some of the most complex and politically sensitive environmental problems of the 1990s<sup>167</sup>. The GATT as a rule-based "temporary" organism may not ever be able to deal in a sensible way with these issues. A resuscitation of the International Trade Organization which failed to materialize in 1947 is considered by many as a better option than a reform of GATT.

We shall conclude this research with a brief discussion of the sustainable development paradigm. One of the problems in the implementation of sustainable development policies is the fact that there is no generally accepted definition for this concept. MacNeill, Winsemius and Yakusiji (1991:130) provide six *Strategic Imperatives for Sustainable Development*<sup>168</sup>:

1. Growth sufficient to meet human needs and aspirations.
2. Policies to increase equity within nations (including intergenerational equity), and between developed and developing countries.
3. Policies to reduce high rates of population growth.
4. Policies to conserve and enhance the resource base.

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<sup>165</sup>. Page 82, *Human Development Report 1992*, UNDP, New York, published by Oxford University Press, 1992, 216 p.

<sup>166</sup>. "Trade and the Environment", advance copy dated February 7, 1992, discussion paper prepared by the GATT secretariat, 53 p.

<sup>167</sup>. The OECD's Environment and Trade Directorates have both issued working papers on the issue of trade and environment. Subsequently, a joint paper of the two directorates was issued on May 13, 1991, for a ministerial meeting in the summer of 1991.

<sup>168</sup>. Adapted (by the authors) from: *Our Common Future - the World Commission on Environment and Development*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1987, 400 p.

5. Policies to ensure the rapid reduction in energy and resource content of growth.
6. Institutional change to integrate the environment in economic decision-making.

These principles have the advantage that they are fairly comprehensive and at the same time operational and easy to understand. I would complement them with two additional postulates: Firstly, there is a need for a long-term macro-industrial policy based on sustainable practices and low energy consumption. The reason for such a policy is the fact that our market economy is based on the price mechanism which does not take into consideration the environmental costs that are imposed on society during any given product's life cycle. Such costs may also be imposed on other countries which shows the need to integrate the environment into international trade discussions. Secondly, collective rights need to have priority over individual rights, and international rights over national rights, where environmental contingencies make such a choice necessary, for instance in the protection of strongly migratory and border straddling fish stocks in many regions of the world.

Finally, it would be easier to promote the sustainable development concept if there was a concise cross-sectoral disciplinary term, analogous for example to terms such as biochemistry, geophysics or phytogeography. That term should express the cross-link between ecology and economics. It seems appropriate to end this thesis by suggesting that it be called *ecolomics*<sup>169</sup>.

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<sup>169</sup>. I have first proposed the term *ecolomics* in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, April 1984, Vol. 40/4, p. 46. Professor Jean Pasquero (Université du Québec à Montréal), a member of the jury committee for this thesis, has suggested in his comments that if one is looking for a neologism one might instead use the term *etholomics* since ethical dimensions are a fundamental and increasingly accepted element of environmental policy and enforcement. The comment is well taken, but I prefer the term *ecolomics* since it focuses attention on the *linkage* between ecology and economics in a more direct and explicit way. The ethical dimensions are addressed implicitly through the definition of sustainable development which I have suggested above.

## **ANNEX**

# **A SYNTHETIC ANALYSIS OF UNEP'S FUNCTIONS AND OF THEIR INTEGRATION IN THE UN SYSTEM**

This presentation follows the structure which was adopted by UNEP for the 1992-1993 budget<sup>170</sup>. The budget in turn is modeled roughly after the System-Wide Medium-Term Environment Programme 1990-95 (SWMTEP)<sup>171</sup>. It is subdivided into 12 programs which will be individually discussed here. The percentage in the sub-titles refers to each program's share of the Fund. Due to the very fragmented nature of UNEP's activities, and due to their global spread and link-up with countless other organizations, this presentation must necessarily be limited to a very synthetic analysis, which will emphasize the thrust of each program, as well as its main ties to the UN system.

### **1. Atmosphere - 4.7 %**

This program can be expected to receive more attention in the future. Climate change in particular is UNEP's "highest priority"<sup>172</sup>. Also, it is one of UNEP's strongest joint programs with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the World Bank and UNDP. UNEP's Background Air Pollution Monitoring Network (BAPMoN), which is part of the Global Environmental Monitoring System (GEMS), measures world-wide trends of gaseous and particulate pollutants, as well as precipitation chemistry, in conjunction mainly with WMO, WHO and ICSU.

#### **1.1. Ozone**

UNEP has played a crucial role in the UN's attempt to curb ozone depletion. Dr. Tolba's perseverance and diplomatic skills throughout the often very difficult negotiations which led from the 1985 Vienna Convention to the 1987 Montreal

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<sup>170</sup>. Proceedings of the Governing Council at its 16th Session, Nairobi, 20-31 May, 1991, p. 104.

<sup>171</sup>. System-Wide Medium-Term Environment Programme 1990-95 (SWMTEP), Nairobi, UNEP, 1988, 102 p.

<sup>172</sup>. Page 4, *UNEP 1988 Annual Report*, Nairobi, UNEP, 1989, 102 p.

Protocol (it entered into force in August 1992<sup>173</sup>) are generally very highly regarded. For instance, the chief U.S. negotiator for this treaty, Ambassador Richard Benedick whose book 'Ozone Diplomacy' (1991) has become an instant classic in international environmental affairs, emphasizes the importance of Dr. Tolba's personal leadership in pressuring and arm-twisting key governments, private interest groups and international organizations into signing the treaty (p. 208).

The Montreal Protocol is of historic significance because this is the first time that a major international protocol was signed in order to prevent future damage although many scientific issues are still unresolved. In fact, progress in this sector has been much faster than in any comparable regime. At the 1987 Montreal Conference, 1986 CFC levels were to be reduced by 50% by mid-1998 (Benedick, 1991:190). At the 1990 London review conference they were to be eliminated completely in the industrialized countries by the year 2000, and at the 1992 Copenhagen review conference this date was changed to 1996. At the same time the phase-out periods for other ozone-destroying chemicals were shortened also. Many countries, including the US and Canada, have committed themselves to a 1995 phase-out in spite of the fact that 92% of all US cars presently have CFC-based air conditioners<sup>174</sup>.

A thorny issue which was postponed to a later conference, however, is the financing and institutionalization of technology transfer to the Third World (Benedick, p. 196). A Fund of US\$ 200 m over three years, which is administered jointly by the World Bank, UNDP, and UNEP as the treasurer, through a secretariat in Montreal represents the pilot phase for a new kind of assistance in environment-friendly assistance. Another US\$ 40 million each over three years are apportioned for China and India as soon as they ratify the protocol. Unfortunately, that only represents about 1¢ per person per year for these giant countries...

At the 1992 Copenhagen conference the developing countries were at least for the time being successful in blocking the attempt of many industrialized countries to put the Ozone Fund under the wings of the GEF. They enjoy equal representation with the industrial countries in the Ozone Fund, but they have much less influence at the GEF. The delegates decided to transform the 'Interim' Fund into a permanent Multilateral Fund which will be politically more difficult to swallow by the GEF. As far as the Fund's budget is concerned, "governments entertained the suggestion that the three-year budget (1994-1996) would be from US\$ 340 million to \$ 500 million"<sup>175</sup>.

Of all the international NGOs taking an interest in the ozone issue, Friends of the Earth is probably the most active and best informed one. Recent trends show just how delicate the relationship between the GEF and the Ozone Fund has become:

Several countries, including the United Kingdom, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Japan and Italy suggest that the GEF could better serve the needs of the ozone layer.

... While not politically impossible, it will certainly be difficult to incorporate the Fund into the GEF.

... Friends of the Earth International shares the developing countries' concerns that a movement towards the GEF is a regressive one. If donor nations persist in their drive to incorporate the Fund into the GEF, without

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<sup>173</sup>. *Brundtland Bulletin*, December 1992, Issue 18, p. SF1.

<sup>174</sup>. *Fortune*, September 9, 1991, p. 10.

<sup>175</sup>. *Brundtland Bulletin*, December 1992, Volume 18, SF1.

addressing the concerns of the developing nations, they place the entire Montreal Protocol at risk<sup>176</sup>.

It should be pointed out in this context that as of September 30, 1992, payments into the Fund were much behind schedule. It is not too surprising that many of the former COMECON countries, including the Russian Federation, have not made any payments for 1991 and 1992. More surprising, perhaps, is that France also has paid nothing for these two years, and the UK only a third of its US\$ 3 million 1991 share<sup>177</sup>. France and the UK have been some of the strongest supporters of the GEF, and their reason for withholding the assessed contributions may very well be an expression of their displeasure over the relative autonomy of the Ozone Fund compared with the GEF.

Obviously, the political preferences of the donor countries cannot be ignored realistically. If the developing countries and the NGOs are pushing the autonomy of the Ozone Fund too forcefully, the donor countries may well respond by not paying their dues, or they may obstruct the next round of the budgeting and replenishment cycle. One may have to choose between more autonomy and democracy of the funding mechanism, or more money. That of course is a fundamental trade-off affecting the financing of Agenda 21 in general, the tension between the Ozone Fund and the GEF is only the tip of the iceberg. It is to be hoped that the post-Rio negotiations will bring the NGO/developing countries coalition on one hand, and the major donor countries on the other hand close enough together to avoid a deadlock. The victim would be the environment.

Difficult as it may be to stop ozone depletion due to the requirement of technological changes and financial sacrifices in industries such as refrigeration, air conditioning, synthetic foams or computer manufacturing (Schmidheiny, 1992:229), these difficulties pale in comparison with the problem of the greenhouse effect, in which UNEP is involved again in conjunction mostly with the World Bank and UNDP through the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

## 1.2. Climate Change

While ozone depletion can be stopped through the replacement of a small number of well-known chemicals, the greenhouse effect is caused primarily by carbon dioxide, which is the unavoidable by-product of every form of combustion of fossil fuel, and by methane, which is generated among other things by garbage dumps, natural gas leaks, and a variety of agricultural sources such as cattle and rice paddies. Clearly, the greenhouse effect has far more complex and varied sources than ozone depletion, the scientific uncertainties are greater, and the financial interests involved here are of such a magnitude in virtually every sector of the economy in every country, that they cannot be compared with the relatively confined ozone problem.

A scientific consensus regarding the seriousness of the greenhouse effect was first established in 1985 at a WMO-ICSU meeting in Villach, Austria. Subsequently UNEP and WMO jointly established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in Geneva, of which UNEP staffs the secretariat. It had its first meeting in Geneva in November 1988, during which three working groups were established.

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<sup>176</sup> P. 23, *Ozone Protection Campaign: At the Crossroads - the Multilateral Fund of the Montreal Protocol*, London, Friends of the Earth International, November 1992, 32 p.

<sup>177</sup> Page 28/29, *idem*.

These were responsible for scientific issues (under U.K. leadership), impact studies (USSR leadership), and response strategies (USA leadership)<sup>178</sup>.

These three groups provided the scientific and policy input for the Second World Climate Conference (SWCC) organized by the UN in Geneva in November 1990, which was attended by 700 of the world's leading scientists. This is the most important climate conference ever held, which concluded, that without action to reduce greenhouse emissions, temperatures will increase by 2 to 5 degrees Celsius over the next century, which will cause a sea level rise of 30 to 100 cm by that time (MacNeill, 1991:76). As MacNeill points out (p. 77), the US is the only Western industrialized country which insisted, that it is "too early" to take actions aimed at a reduction of fossil fuel emissions. In 1988 a Conference on the Changing Atmosphere was held in Toronto, sponsored jointly by the Government of Canada, UNEP and WMO. In its closing statement it concluded:

Humanity is conducting an unintended, uncontrolled, globally pervasive experiment whose ultimate consequences may be second only to a global nuclear war (Head, 1991:83).

A first indication that governments may be starting to take this threat serious was manifested at a summit conference organized on this issue by France, Norway and the Netherlands. It was attended by 17 heads of government from the North and the South in The Hague in March 1989. They decided that a "new institutional authority" should be created within the UN framework which "... shall involve such decision-making procedures as may be effective even if, on occasion, unanimous agreement has not been achieved"<sup>179</sup>. This so-called *Declaration of The Hague* is of historic significance, because for the first time a UN mechanism is advocated by heads of government, which has the potential of giving the UN powers to override the sacro-sanct principle of consensual decision-making and national sovereignty, if it is faced with a global environmental threat such as climate change or transboundary air pollution.

The negotiations over the framework convention on climate change have been compared with those on the Law of the Sea (Sebenius, 1993). At the 1988 Toronto Conference on the Atmosphere there were proponents such as the Canadian Government who were "passionately committed"<sup>180</sup> to a broad, comprehensive International Law of the Air analogous to the Law of the Sea. Others, such as Norwegian Prime Minister Brundtland or British UN Ambassador Sir Crispin Tickell, with whom Sebenius concurs (p. 191), consider that the Law of the Sea process is exactly the model that should not be followed, because the comprehensive approach turned out to be so long, frustrating, unmanageable, and most of all, because it is still not ratified in spite of its signature back in 1982. UNEP was strongly promoting a "Step-by-Step" approach (Tolba, 1989:307) to break down this vast nexus of issues into separate conventions on climate change, the protection of the ozone layer, and transboundary air pollution. The 1988 Toronto Conference was one of the examples which brought Dr. Tolba into open conflict with an industrialized country. In an interview with a Canadian negotiator UNEP's executive director was called "undiplomatic"

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<sup>178</sup>. IPCC Gazette No. 1, June 1989, WHO/UNEP, Geneva.

<sup>179</sup>. GA ECOSOC A/44/340/ - E/1989/120, 22 June 1989.

<sup>180</sup>. Page 34, Closing Address, Tom McMillan, Minister of the Environment, Canada, in *Conference Proceedings, The Changing Atmosphere - Implications for Global Security*, Geneva, WMO-No. 710, Government of Canada, UNEP, 1989, 483 p.

on account of his stance in this matter. Subsequent events, however, sanctioned his viewpoint; the International Law of the Air project is not seriously discussed anymore.

## 2. Water - 5.9%

The decade of 1981-1990 was declared by the UN to be the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade (IDWSSD). Under the responsibility of WHO clean water and adequate sanitation facilities were to be provided to everybody. As the SWMTEP 1990-95 points out, however (p. 27), over one billion people are still without good drinking water, and 1.5 billion have no sanitation, mostly in rural areas and on the edges of large cities. UNEP's action plans for the environmentally sound management of inland waters (EMINWA) help governments to develop integrated strategies, which link water management and development of terrestrial ecosystems as a whole, especially where cooperation between governments sharing large river basins is vital. The Zambezi Action Plan, which was approved in 1987, is presently being executed is an example of an intergovernmental management of a river basin which is shared by eight countries.

UNEP's GEMS/WATER programme is carried out in conjunction with WHO by the Collaborating Centre on Surface and Ground Water Quality, a branch of Canada's Ministry of the Environment, at Burlington, Ontario. These laboratories monitor the quality and quantity of fresh water in lakes and rivers in about 50 countries through a network of over 400 baseline stations (in the lakes), rivermouth stations (measuring river flows), and trend stations (measuring long-term river fluctuations). At a UNEP/WHO Consultation Meeting in Leningrad in August 1990 a new orientation for the 1990s was decided upon for GEMS/Water: the emphasis will be put more on interpretation and global trend analysis, as well as on the elaboration of water management policies, rather than just on monitoring data regarding changes in the pollution of effluents and precipitations. There are also plans to include groundwater analysis by the mid-1990s<sup>181</sup>.

It should be pointed out that the September 1992 issue of the international environmental journal *codécision* (published in Montréal with articles in French and English) is dedicated to water.

## 3. Terrestrial Ecosystems - 13.7%

The fact that this is UNEP's largest sectoral program reflects the urgency and magnitude of problems with terrestrial resources: an area the size of North and South America combined, with a population of 850 million people, is affected by desertification (35 million km<sup>2</sup>), 135 million people of which are facing severely advanced conditions. 60,000 km<sup>2</sup> are irretrievably lost to desertification and a further 200,000 km<sup>2</sup> are seriously degraded. Total bilateral and multilateral expenditures to fight desertification amount to approximately US\$ 4 billion per year<sup>182</sup>. In 1977 the UN adopted a Plan of Action to Combat Desertification (PACD) at the UN Conference on Desertification (coordinated by UNEP), and in 1982 it established of a World Soil Policy and a World Soil Charter (implemented mostly by FAO). In spite of this, UNEP

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<sup>181</sup>. *GEMS/Water Newsletter UNEP/WHO*, Fall 1990, Burlington, Ontario.

<sup>182</sup>. "Sands of Change", *UNEP Environment Brief No. 2*, Nairobi, p. 1 (no date).

considers that "the battle is being lost" and "the goal of arresting desertification seems more distant now than in 1977" (p. 1 and 6).

The reasons for this failure are complex. Many factors can lead to desertification, e.g. deforestation, overgrazing, or inappropriate intensive cash cropping. The symptoms are varied as well, they include encroaching sand dunes, deteriorating croplands and rangelands, waterlogging and salinization of irrigated areas, or the replacement of nutritious grasses by less valuable ones, and they often appear gradually, sometimes almost imperceptibly.

Soil conservation measures include tree planting, terracing steep land, building channels for run-offs and stabilizing sand dunes. These measures are essentially well-known but they are very expensive on a large scale. UNEP considers that local NGOs are most effective in the execution of these projects, because the active participation of the concerned communities and their long-term commitment is indispensable. At the same time, of course, the scale of the problem requires massive means which can only be collected and managed by intergovernmental organizations. The Rio Conference decided to hold a UN Conference on Desertification by June 1994<sup>183</sup>.

The UN Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO) is the main multilateral executing agency in this area. Operationally and administratively it is part of UNDP, although UNDP carries out certain projects through its own Office for Project Service (OPS). Interviews have shown that the delineations among UNSO, OPS and UNEP may be vague sometimes. The trend seems to be, however, that UNDP is becoming more assertive. UNEP cooperates with UNSO through its Consultative Group for Desertification Control (DESCOM), mostly with regards to research and project preparation. It has some policy input but does not get involved at the operational side of the activities. Most donor agencies such as CIDA, on the other hand, give contributions directly to UNSO. In addition to these multilateral projects, Japan, the US and Germany have local offices in some countries, which carry out bilateral projects.

UNEP's involvement in the preservation of endangered species is also channelled through the Terrestrial Ecosystem program. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) which is headquartered in Gland near Geneva is UNEP's main partner in this field. The two organizations cooperate in numerous projects. IUCN membership includes governments and NGOs, it is probably UNEP's most important cooperating organization outside the UN. It is particularly well known for its activities and publications dealing with the protection of biodiversity. Its 1980 *World Conservation Strategy* as well as the 1991 follow-up *Caring for the Earth*<sup>184</sup> were assisted by UNEP and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

In 1974 a branch of the World Bank, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), FAO and UNEP set up the International Board for Plant Genetic Resources (IBPGR) (Caldwell, 1990:255). It has identified ten high priority areas where wild crop species must be protected *on site*. As Caldwell points out, there is "considerable risk of loss of viability" involved in relying on CGIAR's seed banks rather than on site protection as recommended by IUCN's World Conservation Strategy. It should be kept in mind, that in view of the massive spread of monocultures, which are all prone to pests and diseases, the protection of wild species, which may yield higher resistance as well as other qualities, is of extreme importance for

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<sup>183</sup>. *Environmental Policy and Law*, p. 212.

<sup>184</sup>. Published by IUCN in Gland, Switzerland, 1991, 228 p.

billions of people depending for their food on a smaller and smaller number of crop species.

Last but not least, reference should be made in this context to two critical voices: in the special issue of *The Ecologist* of March 1991 on FAO the authors provide a relentless and scathing condemnation of the organization, among other things precisely because of this above-mentioned dangerous loss of crop diversity due to the biological steam roller of the "Green Revolution" for which FAO is held accountable (e.g. Shiva, 1991:58). On the other hand, a special issue of the *New Internationalist* of December 1990 on the World Bank shows how the Bank's policies threaten Costa Rica's food security by pushing the small farmers off their land (e.g. Carty, 1990:18).

#### 4. Oceans - 8.0%

The problems of ocean pollution are so interdisciplinary and complex that inter-agency cooperation is particularly necessary. The UN system has responded by establishing, in 1969, a Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Pollution (GESAMP) whose member organizations are the UN, UNEP, FAO, UNESCO, WHO, WMO, IMO and IAEA.

Its activities like many UN projects and programs are carried out by working groups established on an ad hoc basis under the guidance of a lead agency, which provides administrative and technical support, as well as a major portion of the financial support. Its work is largely based on consensus. GESAMP studies pollution (including radioactivity) originating from ships, coastal area development and seabed exploitation (Caldwell, 1990:279). It meets annually at one of the member organizations' secretariats.

In its 1990 State of the Marine Environment Report GESAMP concluded, that with the exception of the major sea lanes the open seas are still relatively clean. On the other hand, coastal areas where most of the fish stocks are located are deteriorating almost everywhere, be it through eutrophication due to excess nutrients from sewage and agricultural run-offs, oil spills, and other hazardous substances, or through destruction of coral reefs and mangrove forests. GESAMP warns that the marine environment could deteriorate significantly, unless strong, coordinated national and international action is taken now. The threat to marine productivity can have extremely serious consequences in the near future. In many countries a large portion of the protein needs are covered by fish products and other seafood, in the Philippines for instance the share is 54 percent (Porter and Ganapin, 1990:70).

Before the 1987 Montreal Protocol many observers considered that UNEP's most important achievement was its Regional Seas Programme (RSP), under which UNEP brokered 23 conventions with over 130 states for 10 'regional seas' (Haas, 1990:XX) - especially the Med Plan which covers the Mediterranean and achieved the collaboration of all 18 Mediterranean governments, which is no mean feat given the political cleavages in the area (Haas, 1990:98)! In 1985 the RSP secretariat was transferred from Geneva to Nairobi and at the same time its name was changed to Oceans and Coastal Areas Programme (OCA/PAC) (Caldwell, 1990:152). After this transfer the programme's support for the Med Plan has "flagged" and its activities were

hindered by the need to hire an entirely new staff of professionals, as none of the Geneva staff wished to follow (director) Keckes to Nairobi (Haas, 1990:127).

The 1976 Barcelona Convention later led to numerous and increasingly comprehensive protocols covering land-based sources of pollution including contaminants carried by rivers, marine dumping and oil spills. One of the most important components of the Med Plan is a scientific monitoring programme called Med Pol (Caldwell, 1990:155). Another important component is the Blue Plan which was adopted in 1979. Its purpose is to integrate environmental considerations into socioeconomic development policies. As is to be expected, this integration is very difficult to realize among nations with very uneven levels of industrial development, and different economic policies, in addition to the hostilities of the Middle East. A pragmatic approach was found by establishing, in parallel to the rather theoretical and comprehensive Blue Plan which was promoted especially by France, a more concrete set of Priority Action Programmes, which allowed to focus on immediate concerns of the delegates (Haas, 1990:118-120).

For all the above reasons, and because it is neatly focused on a specific and important geographical area, as well as on a limited time span, the Med Plan is a particularly interesting case study of the politics of international environmental affairs. Not surprisingly, Haas' (1990) study is based on his doctoral thesis. His basic hypothesis is the notion that the success of the Med Plan under these difficult political circumstances was only possible thanks to the active intervention of an epistemic community, a phenomenon which was discussed earlier. The members of this community can exercise power on their governments through their authoritative claim to knowledge. Haas argues that this is what allowed negotiations to overcome political barriers. One may question, however, the notion that the Med Plan is such a great success, even though it is certainly very credible that the situation would be worse without it. For one thing, the budget of the plan itself (i.e. without the costs of related national conservation projects) is rather modest to say the least given, the scope and complexity of its mandate: it amounted only to approximately US\$ 4 million per year from 1981 to 1987 - barely enough to pay for a few professionals, conferences and trips - not what one might expect from a serious effort to catalyze and coordinate the clean-up of the Mediterranean.

A much more pessimistic view than Haas' is presented by Boxer (1983). He considers that it is "questionable whether many Mediterranean coastal states really want to know the state of pollution in their coastal waters" (p. 298). He even believes that industrial states like Italy and France purposefully prevent objective scientific analyses of pollution and its effect in their coastal waters. He furthermore considers that the North African states are also extremely sensitive about the protection of their national sovereignty, not to mention the control over the exploration of their seabed resources. As a result, he concludes that UNEP is constantly frustrated in its objective of achieving an unbiased scientific assessment. It should be pointed out in this context that it is the participating governments, not UNEP, which essentially determine the policy of the Med Plan.

5. Lithosphere - 0.3%

UNEP's activities in this domain are essentially limited to the catalyzing and dissemination of research projects on biochemical cycles of the lithosphere in the context of the exploration and exploitation of minerals and groundwater. For this it cooperates mainly with UNESCO and the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU), an umbrella organization of scientific associations headquartered in Paris. Within ICSU, UNEP deals mostly with the Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment (SCOPE), which is based on voluntary cooperation of scientists worldwide.

6. Human Settlements - 2.2%

Cities in developing countries are often growing at rates which double their population in 10-15 years. One billion city dwellers are poorly housed, and at least 100 million have no shelter at all. Rural populations are increasing less rapidly because of migration to the cities, but they still are expected to make up 60 % of developing countries' populations by the year 2000. UNEP estimates that they may represent an even greater threat to the environment than urban growth<sup>185</sup>. The UN's lead agency for national shelter strategies and urban environmental management is HABITAT which cooperates with the UN's regional economic commissions. UNEP's cooperation with HABITAT is facilitated by the fact their secretariats share the same building complex in Nairobi.

7. Human Health and Welfare - 1.7%

UNEP's strength in this domain is its competence in the handling of chemicals through its International Register of Potentially Toxic Chemicals (IRPTC) and its International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS), both located in Geneva. It cooperates with WHO on the evaluation of carcinogenic risks of chemicals, with ILO on occupational exposures, and with IAEA on the assessment of health effects of radioactive substances and nuclear technologies, as well as on guidelines for the handling and disposal of radioactive wastes. At the national level it works with UNDP on the development of national capabilities and institutions. Last but not least, UNEP cooperates with FAO and WHO on a Panel of Experts on Environmental Management for Vector Control (PEEM), which works on the prevention and control of vector-borne parasitic diseases such as Malaria, Schistosomiasis, Onchocerciasis and Trypanosomiasis which cause suffering to hundreds of millions of victims.

8. Energy, Industry and Transportation - 7.2%

UNEP has a relatively autonomous unit in Paris called Industry and Environment Office (IEO). It cooperates mostly with the World Bank, UNDP, ILO, UNIDO and the

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<sup>185</sup> Page 60, *System-Wide Medium-Term Environment Plan, 1990-95*, (SWMTEP) Nairobi, UNEP, 1988, 102 p.

regional economic commissions on cross-sectoral industrial problems. In response to the industrial disasters in Mexico, Bhopal and Basel, the IEO set up in 1988 the Awareness and Preparedness for Emergency at Local Level (APELL) Program. Its mandate is to prepare factories and communities for industrial emergencies, especially in the chemical industry.

In April, 1991, IEO organized in conjunction with the Paris-based International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and with UNCED the Second World Industry Conference on Environmental Management (WICEM II) in Rotterdam. More than 200 corporations and industry associations have expressed their support at WICEM II for the ICC Business Charter for Sustainable Development which has the ambitious goal of introducing sustainable development policies to industry's decision-makers. It also served, together with the Business Council on Sustainable Development in Geneva (Schmidheiny, 1992) as industry's link with UNCED 1992.

There is no specialized agency or other focal point mandated to coordinate energy concerns in the UN system, but IEO is responsible for the coordination of environmental aspects in this field. It is involved in the planning and development of traditional and alternative energy systems in conjunction mainly with the World Bank, UNDP and UNIDO. Furthermore, UNEP cooperates with IAEA on environmental criteria, standards and guidelines regarding the siting, construction and running of nuclear plants, and the disposal of radioactive wastes.

It should be noted in this context that IAEA monitors and oversees itself, i.e. it has the principal mandate of promoting nuclear energy, but at the same time it also acts as the only watchdog not only over nuclear power plants worldwide, but also over the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). In countries like Canada and the US a separate institution has the mandate to control and supervise the nuclear industry's safety (the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, respectively the Atomic Energy Control Board). The UN in its collective wisdom surprisingly doesn't consider such a very fundamental separation between promotion and control responsibilities necessary in the field of mankind's most dangerous technology.

The fact that Iraq, a member in good standing of the IAEA, and a signatory of the NPT, was able to buy nuclear materials and vast quantities of highly specialized nuclear technical equipment for military purposes worth billions of dollars from other IAEA members in good standing - apparently to the big surprise of the international community<sup>186</sup> - might possibly catalyze a reform of IAEA's tight and comprehensive hold on international nuclear affairs. In general terms, IAEA is clearly unable to monitor nuclear transactions worldwide which put the world at risk due to nuclear proliferation and accidents. UNEP has only a very limited and marginal mandate here with tasks like "reviews of safety requirements of (nuclear) energy production"<sup>187</sup>.

Finally, in the area of transportation, the UN again has no focal point except for air and sea transports for which ICAO and IMO are the responsible agencies. UNEP's mandate consists in cooperating mostly with the World Bank, UNDP, UNIDO and ILO in a variety of environmental concerns related to both public and private transports. It is probably fair to say, however, in view of the automobile's paramount economic importance, that UNEP - or the UN for that matter - has less chance here than in any other industrial sector to seriously challenge vested interests with environmental considerations.

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<sup>186</sup>. "Iraq's Atomic Enigma", *The Economist*, July 1991, p. 67.

<sup>187</sup>. *SWMTEP 1990-95, op. cit.* p. 74.

## 9. Environmental Assessment - 18.7%

This is UNEP's largest programme, it is known by the name of *EARTHWATCH*. Its mandate is to monitor and assess the state of the environment, and to supply decision-makers with information which reduces, as much as possible, scientific uncertainty. Interviews at the specialized agencies have shown that UNEP gets, on the whole, good marks for the *EARTHWATCH* programme except for the fact that some of its information has to be paid for, which can be prohibitively expensive for developing countries. Its three main components are:

1. The Global Environmental Monitoring System
2. INFOTERRA
3. The International Register for Potentially Toxic Chemicals (IRPTC)

### 9.1. The Global Environmental Monitoring System (GEMS)

GEMS is fundamental to most of UNEP's work and spans over 140 countries<sup>188</sup>. A recent reorientation places increasing emphasis on forecasting environmental threats and emergency response. It is comprised of over two dozen major global monitoring networks, each of which has an associated data base, and benefits from the cooperation of thousands of technicians and scientists who work for national and international institutions. Many other UN organizations have their own environmental data bases, some of which are very extensive like FAO's, the World Bank's or UNESCO's.

The question of coordinating the large number of data banks on the environment which are scattered throughout the UN system is rather complex. There is a UN Advisory Committee for the Coordination of Information Systems (ACCIS). It is not clear however, to what extent this committee is effective, and what degree of coordination is desirable and feasible. An environmental specialist at the World Bank found in an interview that any attempt at coordination in this field is useless, since it is simply too complex, and since professionals know where to look for pertinent information. On the other hand, the World Bank is known for vigorously "controlling its milieu" (Le Prestre, 1989:188), it is therefore not surprising that it tends to resist coordination attempts by the UN in this domain as in others.

One of GEMS' joint programs with IUCN/WWF maintains data bases on endangered species and publishes the *Red Data Book* series on some of them. A biennial *Environment Data Report* is produced in London by a GEMS branch called Monitoring and Assessment Research Center (MARC). Swiss Universities and GEMS cooperate on two projects: First of all they work with UNITAR on a Global Resource Information Data base (GRID), a technologically advanced tool which allows to analyze worldwide natural resources by using computerized maps and satellite imagery. Secondly, they join forces with UNESCO on the World Glacier Monitoring Service which has recently published the first survey of the world's glaciers and ice fields. Based on this major scientific compilation, every year a geographically representative selection of glaciers is examined. One of the purposes of these studies consists in evaluating evidence of climate change based on the retreat of glaciers worldwide.

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<sup>188</sup>. *UNEP Profile, Nairobi*, UNEP, 1990, 48 p.

In conclusion, GEMS is the backbone of UNEP's scientific activities in many different sectors of the environment. It has also a programme which begins at the human end, the Human Exposure Assessment Location Programme (HEAL): it monitors the total intake of pollutants for certain population groups from all sources, i.e. liquids, food, air and skin contact.

In spite of the fact that UNEP's credibility and competence depends to a significant extent on the quality of the GEMS projects, it should be borne in mind that GEMS's emphasis, like most of UNEP's activities, is largely on catalyzing projects in conjunction with other organizations inside and outside the UN system, as well as with experts and consultants.

## 9.2. INFOTERRA

INFOTERRA is essentially a referral system which processes about 20,000 scientific queries per year regarding environmental problems through a network of national focal points. These are institutions which are designated by the member governments to act as a clearing house for scientific information within the country. In the US for instance it is the Environmental Protection Agency. All together, the network includes over 6,000 institutions, most of them outside the UN system. In 1980 INFOTERRA underwent a reorientation which attempts to make it more useful by providing not just referrals but to consult the sources and to provide tailormade replies<sup>189</sup>.

## 9.3. The International Register for Potentially Toxic Chemicals (IRPTC)

There are presently over 70,000 chemicals in use worldwide (including pharmaceuticals), and about 1000 are added each year. IRPTC is a global clearing-house for scientific and technical, as well as regulatory information, and acts both as a data bank and a global network with the aim of improving safety in the use of industrial chemicals. Similar to INFOTERRA, but more specialized and formal, it links government-mandated institutions and manages information in a consistent, scientifically sound fashion<sup>190</sup>. It also offers training and publishes a variety of documents related to the control of hazardous chemicals.

The 1987 London Guidelines for the Exchange of Information on Chemicals in International Trade formalized the control of hazardous chemicals and requested signatory states to notify IRPTC of bans and restrictions. Furthermore, the principle of '*Prior Informed Consent*' (PIC) was introduced into the international trading of hazardous chemicals. It obliges signatories to inform importing countries of the dangers to health and environment, and to obtain their agreement before shipping. The PIC principle was subsequently tightened and reshaped into a somewhat more formal system, which is based on IRPTC standards and procedures. At meetings in 1988 and 1989 in Senegal and New York (paid for, as often happens, through extra-budgetary contributions from industrialized countries) a PIC system based on a notification arrangement was approved. Although this leaves open loopholes which were

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<sup>189</sup>. *UNEP Profile*, Nairobi, UNEP, 1990, p. 28.

<sup>190</sup>. "Prior Informed Consent - A Breakthrough in North-South Relations, *Environmental Policy and Law*, Vol. 19/2, 1989, pp. 40/41.

criticized by NGOs and most developing countries, the fact that the final agreement was accepted both by the North and the South was seen as a "tremendous break-through"<sup>191</sup>. Finally, at 1989 UNEP's Governing Council added chemical disposal practices to IRPTC's responsibilities.

#### 10. Environmental Management Measures - 11.6%

This programme has more than doubled since the last budget's 5.7 % share - that is by far the biggest increase both in absolute and relative terms. This reallocation reflects the fact the program addresses the nexus of problems which are probably now getting the greatest attention among all global environmental problems, namely the *convergence* of economic development on one hand, and international environmental agreements on the other hand. At the Rio Conference a Convention on Climate Change was signed, but it does presently not contain any binding time tables or emission limits. An Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Framework Convention on Climate Change (INC-CC) with a secretariat in Geneva is in charge of negotiations. It should be noted that it is a common practice for industrialized countries to provide additional funding on a very flexible basis to activities seen as essential.

##### 10.1. Trade in Endangered Species

The 1973 Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and associated national legislations are "often considered to be the most successful international conservation agreement in history" (Slocombe, 1989:20). UNEP maintains its secretariat in Lausanne. It cooperates closely with IUCN and its national Commissions which is seen by Slocombe as essential for CITES' success (p. 27). Global trade in legal wildlife and wildlife products amounts to US\$ 5 billion to which maybe another US\$ 1.5 billion of illegal trade needs to be added (p. 23). In spite of this relative success there is disagreement over the very purpose of the convention among its members: some want to use it as a wildlife protection tool, whereas others see it much more as a mechanism for trade regulation. While the IUCN/UNEP/WWF World Conservation Strategy leans toward protection, Slocombe suggests a pragmatic approach emphasizing the protection of whole populations, rather than focusing on a narrow interpretation of survival of specific species in a national context (p. 28). Misch (1992:33) also leans toward a "new marriage between conservation and development".

The most publicized species which CITES has ever taken under its wings is the African Elephant, protected since 1989. As a result of this ban, wholesale prices for ivory tumbled from up to approx. US\$ 90.- to as low as US\$ 1.35 per pound (Contreras, 1991:87). The problem of poaching and the decline of herds varies widely among African countries. In Kenya where the threats to the Elephant's survival were particularly serious before the ban, herds declined from about 65,000 to 17,000 between 1981 and 1989 (Cheater, 1991:34).

On the other hand, the Southern African countries Botswana, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia and South Africa claim that their herds are stable or even increasing (especially in Botswana), and that they need the receipts from the ivory

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<sup>191</sup> *Environmental Policy and Law, idem.*

trade to protect them from poachers. Furthermore, elephant herds can do considerable damage to agriculture, and these countries claim that they need to cull elephants in certain areas in order to protect agriculture, and at the same time that they need the funds from ivory sales to manage the herd's long-term stability. Much will hinge on these countries' ability to propose credible mechanisms, which will allow a strictly managed culling, for instance by shipping the ivory from a single Botswana airport directly to tightly controlled markets, without causing a resurgence of massive poaching.

## 10.2. Hazardous Waste Shipments

Another UNEP achievement in environmental management is the 1989 Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal. It came into force in May 1992 after it received the required twenty ratifications (Rosencranz and Eldridge, 1992:318). The Convention is based on the principle of "Prior Informed Consent" (PIC), i.e. before shipment official consent of the receiving nation in writing based on an adequate understanding of the dangers involved must be obtained by the exporters. If the provisions of the Conventions are violated, Article 8 stipulates that the exporting country must re-import the waste and remains responsible for its ultimate disposal.

The monetary incentives for illegal dumping in developing countries are huge: disposal costs in some countries were negotiated as low as US\$ 3.- per tonne, which compares with disposal costs in industrial countries which have sky-rocketed over the past few years to reach between \$240-\$2400 per tonne (Kohl and Sud, 1989:12). The problem of controlling the vast flows of hazardous wastes in the light of these illegal profit opportunities is compounded by the fact that according to the director of the IRPTC "no one really knows" the quantities annually transported throughout the world<sup>192</sup>. Greenpeace, which has established a world-wide reputation for scientific data gathering in this sector, estimates a quantity of 3 million tons per year. In practice, the PIC principle has been found to be easily subverted (French, 1991). It will certainly be tightened at future review conferences: "The impact of the Basel Convention will hinge upon the standard to be applied in determining 'environmentally sound' disposal of hazardous waste. (Rosencranz and Eldridge, 1992:319)" One of the loopholes consists in declaring shipments as materials for recycling which may entail less stringent procedures.

In the wake of the incidents mentioned earlier all African countries with the exception of Morocco and South Africa have completely banned the importation of hazardous wastes through the Bamako Convention, which was adopted in January 1991. Other developing countries in Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia are considering similar import bans. As Rosencranz and Eldridge (1992:319) point out, however, "the financial hardship faced by African nations makes it unlikely that funding will be found to monitor and enforce the Bamako Convention's provisions". They consider that the Global Environment Facility "may provide" the means to prevent a violation of this import ban.

In view of the enormous profit potential inherent in the toxic waste trade this sounds very optimistic. Does the Basel Convention facilitate and sanction not only transboundary movements and disposal abroad but indirectly the generation of hazardous wastes as critics claim? Or is it presently the best possible and preferable

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<sup>192</sup> IAEA News Feature, Vienna, December 1990, p. 2.

alternative to much increased illegal dumping which would arguably occur as a consequence of a complete ban, and which may be smaller in quantity but potentially far more damaging due to its complete lack of supervision? If wastes are dumped illegally it may be impossible to obtain essential information about the nature and degree of toxicity, the location and timing of the dumping (perhaps the coastal waters, or a bridge somewhere at night...), short and long term effects on populations, or even the country of origin of the wastes. It may be too early to tell, but I tend to believe that only a gradual tightening of provisions can lead to a successful ban of these exports in the future. In the face of very serious environmental threats such as toxic wastes disposal it is certainly imperative to look realistically at the potential for perverse effects of radical measures.

The financial pressures at stake are illustrated in a dramatic recent case by following UNEP statement:

Italian and a Swiss firms trading in hazardous waste entered into a contract with ... an individual who described himself as Minister of Health of the Republic of Somalia. The contract allows for the export of various types of waste to Somalia for 20 years, 1991-2011. The value of the current phase of the contract is believed to be in the order of US\$ 80 million.

Shipments, each of 100,000 to 150,000 tonnes - were to have yielded a profit of US\$ 8-10 million each. A Swiss firm involved in the transaction was to take a profit of US\$ 2.3 million per shipment<sup>193</sup>.

The same UNEP statement also mentioned plans by a Swiss firm to build two ship-board incinerators in violation of international law. It is interesting to note that Switzerland has signed the Basel Convention whereas Italy did not, and that UNEP was able to "follow up" quickly with the Swiss authorities (no word about the Italian situation). UNEP had no firm evidence that shipments under this contract were actually made although there were allegations of dumping along the Somali coast.

Finally, it should be noted that nuclear wastes are not included in the Basel Convention, there is only a code of practice governing the movement of radioactive wastes across national borders which was adopted in 1989 by IAEA's 122 member states, but it is not legally binding<sup>194</sup>.

## 11. Environmental Awareness - 13.0%

Current educational programs from grade schools to universities and professional schools do not take environmental concerns seriously enough, often they are considered as a somewhat cumbersome addition to an already overloaded curriculum. The same can be said about the media, although important progress has been made in the past few years. In 1975 UNESCO and UNEP started the International Environmental Education Programme (IEEP) which tries to bring environmental awareness into the classroom and the public domain. An important milestone was the International Congress on Environmental Education and Training which was held in Moscow in 1987.

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<sup>193</sup>. *Environmental Policy and Law*, December 1992, Vol. 5&6, p. 347.

<sup>194</sup>. *IAEA News Feature*, Vienna, December 1990.

The 1990s have been declared by UNESCO and UNEP as the World Decade for Environmental Education. Emphasis will be put on cooperation between governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. On the whole, UNEP plays a rather passive role here, it is one of the rare sectors where it acts as the funding agency, for UNESCO in this case, because UNESCO has far more specialized competencies and resources.

The most important periodical in this field is the quarterly environmental education newsletter *Connect* published by UNESCO in Paris with joint sponsorship by UNEP. It is available free of charge in all six official UN languages (English, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic and Chinese).

In 1988/89 UNEP hired the consultant firm Louis Harris & Associates to evaluate public opinion regarding environmental issues in 14 nations on four continents. On the whole, the study found people to be pessimistic about both medium term (5 years) and long term (50 years) perspectives. In rich and poor countries, however, at least 75% of the people and of their leaders considered that more environmental efforts were needed, and that the negative trend could be reversed if the environment became a national priority<sup>195</sup>.

## 12. Technical and Regional Cooperation - 13.0%

This programme focuses on the coordination of environmental activities among several governments of a geographical region. The fact that Africa is the poorest continent justifies UNEP's particular attention to its environmental problems. As may be expected, however, complaints are made, especially by Latin Americans about favoritism due to the location of UNEP's secretariat in Nairobi. These complaints may be justified to the extent that Dr. Tolba had a habit, according to some of the interviews with UN civil servants, to skilfully use the large number of votes of the African continent (51 countries) for his diplomatic and policy purposes. UNEP should perhaps be more sensitive to Latin American needs, but there is no doubt that UNEP funds spent on African projects are generally considered to be very worthwhile even though they are completely inadequate, especially in the fight against desertification.

The Cairo Programme for African Cooperation was adopted by the first African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) in December 1985. UNEP provides the secretariat for the Programme at its Nairobi Headquarters, but it is an African initiative, conceived and managed by Africans<sup>196</sup>.

The Cairo Programme contains pilot projects which cover 150 villages and 30 pastoral areas; their aim is "to achieve self-sufficiency in food and energy by using the traditional skills and experience of the villagers and pastoral peoples themselves in development that is community-based, scientifically appropriate, economically feasible, socially acceptable and environmentally sound" [p. 2]. ACMEN has four Committees:

- Desert and Arid Lands
- River and Lake Basins
- Forests and Woodlands
- Seas

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<sup>195</sup>. Harris Study Summary, UNEP Washington DC, May 9, 1989.

<sup>196</sup>. "The Cairo Programme for African Cooperation", ACMEN, Nairobi (no date), 18 p.

These Committees cooperate in cross-sectoral fields such as environmental monitoring, energy, education and training, or science and technology. This cooperation is structured through a number of so-called Networks in conjunction with GEMS, WMO's Regional Office for Africa located in Bujumbura, Burundi, as well as with national scientific research centers located in Ghana, Egypt and Senegal.

The *Zambezi River Action Plan* (ZACPLAN) is the first of a series of regional river and lake programmes being catalyzed by UNEP in conjunction with the concerned governments, eight in this case: Angola, Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Its purpose is to coordinate and develop environmental assessment, management and legislation mainly for the purposes of irrigation, hydropower, tourism, transport and communications. The river basin which covers 1.3 million square kilometers has a population of 20 million<sup>197</sup>. This is obviously a very ambitious project which obtained extra-budgetary support from Finland, Norway, Sweden and Canada.

Another major example of UNEP's role as a catalyst in regional cooperation is the *Caribbean Action Plan* which is one of the ten Regional Seas Programmes. It covers the Wider Caribbean Region which includes the countries of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea, i.e. the US Gulf Coast States, Coastal Mexico, Central America, and the Northern rim of South America from French Guiana to Columbia. The objectives of the Action Plan include problems which are common to many of these countries, such as deforestation, overfishing, untreated sewage disposal, or beach and dune destruction which exposes interior areas to the ravages of storm surges and coastal flooding.

The Caribbean Action Plan was adopted at a 1981 conference in Montego Bay. It cooperates mainly with the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), OAS, UNDP, as well as with bilateral agencies such as U.S.AID and CIDA. Cooperation is structured through a Monitoring Committee formed by representatives from nine states, and a Regional Coordination Committee which operates under the joint authority of the Monitoring Committee and UNEP<sup>198</sup>. The main achievements of the Action Plan so far include provisions for oil spill emergencies which have been developed with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Oceanographic Commission (IOC), as well as projects for environmental education, impact assessment and conservation.

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<sup>197</sup>. Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Environmental Management of the Common Zambezi River System, Harare, 26-28 May, 1987, UN 1987.

<sup>198</sup>. *Action Plan for the Caribbean Environment Programme*, Kingston, UNEP, 1987, 44 p.

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