



Capacity building for sustainable development:

AN OVERVIEW OF UNEP ENVIRONMENTAL
CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Capacity Building for Sustainable Development:
An overview of UNEP environmental capacity development initiatives.

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DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES**



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Foreword by the UNEP Executive Director

It is hard to overstate the importance of the environment to sustainable development. It is the bedrock on which our survival lies. Any global programme of development created without taking the environment into account will truly be a house built on sand.

Over the thirty years since the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment paved the way for the establishment of UNEP that message has been gradually, but surely, incorporated into the global development debate. While there is still much to be done to ensure that the environment features in all planning and decision making by governments, intergovernmental bodies and the private sector, it can now honestly be said that the environment is firmly on the development agenda.

The credit for that achievement should be broadly spread. The scientific community, civil society and non-governmental organisations have played a large part. So have the many organisations within the United Nations system, not least the special efforts of the current Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, through initiatives like the Global Compact and his report to the Millennium Assembly which informed the Millennium Declaration. Also deserving credit are the many governments and private sector organisations which are increasingly embracing the fundamental principles of sound environmental management: sustainable consumption, cleaner production, and the life-cycle and precautionary approaches which are central to the quest for sustainable development.

As the voice for the environment within the United Nations system, UNEP has played, and continues to play, an essential role, not only as catalyst, advocate and educator, but as a key facilitator. Turning words into actions is no easy task. Often tools need to be developed, new skills learned, institutional infrastructures evolved. That is the subject of this book. Capacity building is central to the work of UNEP. In whatever field UNEP finds itself working, whether in assessing global environmental trends and conditions, developing international or national legal instruments for environmental management, or encouraging new partnerships and mind-sets within civil society and the private sector, capacity building is, and has always been, an integral component.

As the international community prepares to face the challenges of sustainable development in a globalised world, with political will reinvigorated by the World Summit on Sustainable Development, UNEP capacity building work will be essential if we are to successfully attain the goals of a peaceful, prosperous and secure future for humankind.

*Klaus Toepfer, Executive Director,
United Nations Environment Programme*

Preface

The following pages detail the broad scope of UNEP capacity building for wise environmental management. They are a resource for the growing family of UNEP partners. Within these pages governments, intergovernmental organisations, national, regional and global institutions, academia, civil society and the private sector will find ideas and examples of how UNEP can help make real their plans and aspirations for a better, more sustainable world.

This series of examples of areas in which UNEP works, and the activities it performs within those areas, is not exhaustive. Nonetheless, it gives a taste of how UNEP is supporting the environmental pillar of sustainable development. The purpose of such a compilation is twofold. First, UNEP wants to inform the governments, institutions and citizens of developing countries and countries with economies in transition about capacity building opportunities available from UNEP. Second, it wants to encourage donors and other partners to join UNEP in meeting the urgent needs of environmental capacity development.

Fulfilling those needs is essential for creating a sustainable future. The increasing impacts of climate change and urbanisation; the impending water crisis in much of the world; the over-exploitation of the world's oceans, forests and other natural resources: all demand innovative thinking, new approaches, and the capacity to implement them. Sometimes this means strengthening legal infrastructure, sometimes it means developing new institutional mechanisms, sometimes it means transferring appropriate technology to where it is needed. These are among the activities that UNEP, in collaboration with a growing family of partners, is supporting. By building capacity across the globe and in every sector where sound environmental management is an issue, UNEP is helping to fulfil the goals for a sustainable future set out in Agenda 21 and reinforced at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development.

*Donald Kaniaru, Director,
UNEP Division of Environmental Policy Implementation*



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