

GPA IGR-2 HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2006

The High-Level Segment of the GPA IGR-2 began on Thursday, with delegates hearing opening statements, as well as reports from Monday's breakout groups on national implementation in action, Tuesday's partnerships workshops, and Wednesday's plenary work on building a common agenda. In the afternoon, ministers and other high-level officials engaged in nine roundtable discussions on the importance of oceans, coasts and islands and their associated watersheds, and the way forward.

MINISTERIAL HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT

OPENING STATEMENTS: Chair Zhou Shengxian, Minister of the State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA), China, noted the exchange of experiences and progress achieved over the past three days.

Underlining the significance of international cooperation in efforts to protect the marine environment, Hua Jianmin, State Councillor, State Council, China, noted that rapid economic growth leads to increasing damage to marine resources. He said the international community has recognized the significance of marine protection through the adoption of the GPA as well as the Regional Seas Conventions. He outlined China's efforts with regard to marine environmental protection, including the adoption of China's Agenda 21, but stressed that his country's environmental situation is still "grey" and that the marine environment is facing unprecedented pressure. He noted that his government will strive to establish an environmentally friendly society and carry out pollution prevention efforts from hilltops to oceans. He expressed hope that other countries will continue supporting China in its efforts to promote sustainable development and called on nations to join hands to protect "our common blue home."

Achim Steiner, UNEP Executive Director, recalled the GPA's origins in the scientific assessment that led to the understanding of the linkage between land-based activities and the marine environment, and noted progress made since the GPA's adoption in 1995. Highlighting the recent launch of the report "The State of the Marine Environment: Trends and Processes," he stressed reductions in oil and radioactive waste pollution, but a continued increase in many of the nine pollutants identified by the GPA, in particular nutrients and sewage. He emphasized that over 50 countries have developed a national plan of action (NPA), with many countries carrying out mangrove conservation

and rehabilitation activities and increasing their GPA budget. Steiner stressed the Global Environment Facility's (GEF) funding of GPA activities and welcomed the collaboration of the private sector in marine protection efforts, including that of the International Association of Ports and Harbors. Noting that China's rapid economic growth is watched with fascination and concern, he stated that Chinese environmental protection efforts will give hope to the rest of the world to achieve sustainable development. He stressed the need to link the GPA to the global agenda, such as the target to significantly reduce the loss of biodiversity by 2010. Steiner expressed hope for the adoption of a moratorium on high seas bottom trawling at the UN General Assembly in November 2006 and indicated UNEP's continued commitment to administer the GPA Coordination Office.

REPORT FROM DAYS ONE TO THREE: Mathripala Sirisena, Minister of Environment, Sri Lanka, reported on IGR-2's first day, which focused on mainstreaming the GPA into national development planning, financing GPA implementation, and strengthening legislative and institutional arrangements. He said delegates had stressed the importance of, *inter alia*: private sector involvement; capacity building; mainstreaming the GPA and environmental considerations into all levels of government; experience sharing; innovative technologies; cost-efficient solutions; community-based management programmes; and engagement with multilateral donors and regional development banks.

Ian Campbell, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Australia, reported on the second day of the Meeting, which dealt with partnerships. He commended the GPA and parties for progress achieved, but said much remains to be done to fight the combined effects of pollution, overfishing, marine habitat destruction, and climate change. Advocating the ecosystem approach, Campbell said robust and targeted partnerships are key to successful GPA implementation, noting the need for strong leadership and unambiguous assignment of specific tasks to partners. He said integrated water resources management (IWRM) and integrated coastal zone management are more successful when all stakeholder groups are engaged, and the GPA is an appropriately flexible mechanism to address global problems that require local responses.

Rejoice Mabudafhasi, Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, South Africa, and IGR-2 Vice-Chair, summarized the third day of the Meeting, which addressed GPA progress and the way forward. She said focus lies on building a common agenda,

including by aligning the GPA with other relevant international agreements and strengthening the GPA's facilitating role, and noted that progress depends on the sustained determination of national governments. She stated that delegates described progress made at the national level, with some suggesting ways to strengthen implementation and identifying wastewater as a main problem, and others calling for: sustained financing; greater focus on capacity building and technology support; collaboration between stakeholders at all levels; and coordination between the global, regional and national levels. She said delegates supported additional regional workshops, pilot projects, and sharing of lessons learned.

On guidance for 2006-2011, Mabudafhasi indicated that delegates valued the GPA's flexibility to respond to emerging needs, while expressing satisfaction with the guidance presented, especially the practical advice on: implementing the ecosystem approach; South-South interactions and collaboration with NGOs; linkages to social programmes; and ways to address unsustainable patterns of production and consumption. She noted calls for additional finances, management training, technical assistance, and a UNEP focal point for SIDS.

On the proposed GPA Coordination Office work programme, she highlighted delegates' call for increased: level of detail; emphasis on South-South cooperation; focus on identifying creative means of fundraising; and collaboration with multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).

On the draft Beijing Declaration, she said it aims to be a brief, action-oriented document focusing on practical solutions, and calls for strengthened: regional action; financial resources; participation of local authorities and civil society; and incorporation of IWRM into NPAs.

The remaining part of the morning session was chaired by Vice-Chair Ferguson Theophilus John (Saint Lucia).

Awni Behnam, International Oceans Institute, on behalf of stakeholders and other major groups, expressed gratitude to the GPA Office Coordinator and the Chair of the Working Group for allowing stakeholders to make an input to the drafting of the Beijing Declaration. Behnam underlined the vital role stakeholders can play in bringing about change through partnerships, providing leadership by example, and promoting community-based approaches. He cautioned against procrastination and called for generosity from donors, participatory attitudes, enforcing commitments, and promoting training and education. He requested that the stakeholders' submission be annexed to the IGR-2 report.

Zhaoqian Li, Mayor, Rizhao City, China, explained that the circular economy is a practical concept implemented in his coastal city, which has been designated a national model of a circular economy by SEPA. He gave a detailed description of the progressive stages of the circular economy, and provided examples of successful projects, such as the reclamation of power plant ash, and of wastewater in a pulp and paper factory, and solar energy utilization. He recounted methods used to raise awareness regarding the circular economy, and ways of promoting a sense of responsibility on the part of entrepreneurs, local officials and the general public.

MINISTERIAL DISCUSSION ON THE IMPORTANCE OF OCEANS, COASTS AND ISLANDS AND THEIR ASSOCIATED WATERSHEDS, AND THE WAY FORWARD:

This afternoon session was chaired by Vice-Chair John. Stefan Wallin, State Secretary of the Environment, Finland, stated that despite significant achievements, much remains to be

done to enhance GPA implementation. He stressed the need to: combine sustainable development and biodiversity conservation, using the ecosystem approach; share experiences, measures, and policies, taking into account different countries' situations; make NPAs more efficient by identifying and using performance indicators; enhance cross-sectoral cooperation; and encourage sectors to bear their responsibilities. He also encouraged States to: identify innovative conservation, development and financing mechanisms; develop partnerships with different stakeholders; strengthen capacities and knowledge through education; enhance and harmonize scientific research and monitoring and disseminate the resulting data; develop, expand, and use synergies between the GPA and other international organizations and MEAs; promote long-term commitment at all levels; and encourage other countries to ratify and implement relevant MEAs.

Elizabeth Thompson, Minister of Housing, Lands and Environment, Barbados, underscored the importance of the marine environment for the Caribbean region's culture and livelihoods, noting the severe impacts of marine pollution and climate change. She said poverty eradication and empowerment of indigenous communities should be an integral part of GPA implementation. Lauding GPA achievements, including partnerships such as White Water to Blue Water, and Hilltops to Oceans, and the increasing involvement of the GEF in marine ecosystem-based projects, she: called for increased financial commitment from governments; advocated community-oriented partnerships; challenged industry, civil society, NGOs and financial institutions to invest in GPA projects; supported a UNEP oceans focal point; and encouraged all governments to identify a national focal point for GPA implementation.

Steiner, UNEP, welcomed the ministerial consultation and its informal setting. He said high-level officials are at the front line of efforts to turn the aspirations of the GPA into reality, and invited them to deliberate on, *inter alia*: generating political will; drawing on past experiences; and identifying key factors for successful partnerships.

A summary of the roundtable discussions will be presented to the High-Level Segment on Friday.

IN THE CORRIDORS

The penultimate day of IGR-2 saw the closed roundtable discussion of ministers and other high-level representatives. The format of the event, with delegation heads huddled around nine tables spread out in the main conference hall, appeared unusual, leading a participant to refer to it as the potential start of "Beijing-style consultations." According to a witness, the proximity setting was "somewhere between a formal plenary and a cocktail party."

Although no interpretation was provided, the ministers seemed pleased with the arrangement. It effectively precluded certified country-report presentations, and provided them a rare opportunity for relaxed peer-to-peer interaction. Judging by the animated conversations observed, the discussions were useful, neatly topping off a conference whose success appears to be assured.

ENB SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS: The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of the second Intergovernmental Review Meeting of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities will be available on Monday, 23 October 2006 online at: <http://www.iisd.ca/oceans/igr2/>

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