

Global Environmental Governance: Elements of a Reform Agenda

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“First, any calls for GEG reform should begin with a recognition of—indeed, a celebration of—the important strides made by global environmental policy over the last three decades.”

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The previous two chapters have presented a broad evaluation of the intense debates that have been ongoing on the various dimensions of the global environmental governance challenge. Our purpose here has not been to present an exhaustive review of these discussions. Rather, we have sought to only highlight what we believe are some of the key aspects of the intellectual and policy debates on GEG reform. The premise of this study is built upon the following ideas:

- First, any calls for GEG reform should begin with a recognition of—indeed, a celebration of—the *important strides made by global environmental policy over the last three decades*. Having said that, there is a *clear—and urgent—need for global environmental governance reform*. Such reform is most likely to be effective if it comes along with system-wide UN reform.
- Second, while the need for reform is urgent, the reform agenda need not be drastic. There is much in the GEG system that does, in fact, work well. Moreover, there are a number of encouraging trends that can, and should, be built upon. In short, the *system need not be entirely dismantled to be rebuilt*. However, this is not to propose merely cosmetic change. Instead, it is to suggest that the reform agenda should strengthen those elements of the GEG system that do work, while at the same time *targeting a limited number of the most critical challenges and deficiencies*. Conceptually, as well as strategically, the need is for a small but targeted agenda of reform that is both doable and worth doing. *Grandiose schemes for massive overhaul of the GEG system are neither desirable nor realistic*.
- Finally, in order to be meaningful, a reform agenda should not only be targeted at the most important challenges and concerns, but should also be *contextualized within a larger and longer-term vision of what the eventual state of the GEG system should be like*. While the immediate steps should be identified with an eye on that which is desirable and doable, the ultimate goals of the reform agenda should be more ambitious and should be clearly in sight. *Ultimately, all GEG efforts must be for the purpose of improving the actual state of the global environment*. This can best be achieved if a systemic (as opposed to a piecemeal) approach is taken.

In building from these broad ideas, it seems to us that the most appropriate place to start is not by thinking about what should be done, nor even about what *can* be done, but rather to start from thinking about *why* we want to do anything at all. Do we have a shared vision of what the global environmental governance system should eventually look like? What is it that we want the GEG system to do? What is the direction that we want the system to move in? What, after all, is the purpose of GEG reform? Having a longer-term vision of the direction that we want the GEG system to move in will not only allow us to identify the short-term measures that might begin moving the system in that direction, but should also help us in evaluating the progress towards those goals, and making any course corrections that might be necessary.

As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, there does seem to be an unstated but robust consensus on what should be the central goals of the GEG system. Five goals, in particular, stand out as being particularly important and command broad-based support:

- **Goal #1. Leadership.** The GEG system should grasp the attention and visible support of high-profile political leaders. The key institutions within the system should be managed by leaders of the highest professional calibre and international repute; all working together towards the best interests of the GEG system as a whole.
- **Goal #2. Knowledge.** Science should be the authoritative basis of sound environmental policy. The GEG system should be seen as a knowledge-based and knowledge-producing system.
- **Goal #3. Coherence.** GEG should operate as a coherent “system” with reasonable coordination, regular communication and a shared sense of direction among its various elements.
- **Goal #4. Performance.** The institutions that make up the GEG system should be well-managed; they should have the resources they need and should use these resources efficiently; and they should be effective in implementation. The ultimate purpose of the GEG system is to improve the global environmental condition.
- **Goal #5. Mainstreaming.** The GEG system should seek to incorporate environmental concerns and actions within other areas of

international policy and action, and particularly so in the context of sustainable development.

We believe that these goals can be the basis of a shared global vision for the global environmental governance system. While many different ideas have been proposed for the reform of the GEG system, most of them seek to actualize some or all of these goals in various ways. Indeed, there are many different pathways that could be adopted to arrive at these goals. The remainder of this chapter will outline one set of pathways and a set of practical recommendations for how the GEG system may be better aligned with these goals.

It should also be noted that although the recommendations below are divided broadly around the five major goals identified above, many of them overlap and have multiple benefits. For example, one of the recommendations made in the leadership section—appointing the same individual as executive head of multiple related MEA secretariats—would not only encourage outstanding candidates to be interested in these positions, but would also enhance system coherence. Many other recommendations also have similarly parallel and overlapping benefits in multiple areas, even if they are discussed in only one section.

Goal #1. Leadership

There is probably no better investment in GEG reform than an investment in leadership. The larger goal is a GEG system that commands the respect, attention and active support of high-profile world leaders; and is composed of institutions that are led by the most outstanding, able and competent leaders available, who view the overall goals of GEG excellence as the common cause and purpose of all organizations within the system. Leadership, in this sense, is not only a driver of system-wide excellence, it is a sign of it.

Leadership is a broad concept and can mean different things. Here we refer only to individual leaders—both in terms of the political capital that world leaders are willing to invest in the GEG system and its reform, and also the individuals who lead the various institutions within the GEG system. Moreover, in talking about leadership within the GEG system we refer to the collectivity of individuals leading the various components of the global environmental system, in particular, UNEP, MEA secretariats, various international environmental funds, etc. What we need is: (a) a cadre of political “champions” for the environment; (b) improvement in the selection of the leaders and the management of global environmental organizations; and (c) a demonstrated commitment among this leadership to hold the common interests of the GEG system above the interests of their organizational fiefdoms. Some steps that might move the GEG system in this direction include:

- **Mobilize a coalition of high-profile, well-known and widely respected world leaders, who can visibly and consistently champion the cause of GEG reform.**
 - Countries and individual world leaders who have already taken the initiative to raise this concern should *identify and convene other committed international leaders—including current and former government leaders as well as civil society leaders, environmentally-conscious famous personalities, etc.—to invest their political capital and public profile to push for improved global environmental governance and performance.* This will not only keep the topic alive in the public mind, but will give space and sustenance to champions of change within the system, including to institutional and domestic environmental leadership.
 - Such a coalition of world leaders (serviced by a technically and politically competent secretariat) could use their own convening power as well as existing high-impact forums such as G8 meetings, European Union Summits, the UN General Assembly, the World Economic Forum, the World Social Forum, etc. to highlight the need and to demonstrate their support for a strong and meaningful GEG system.
 - The EU may be particularly well-placed to take the lead in mobilizing such a coalition given that a number of EU leaders and Member States are already committed to GEG reform.
- **Streamline the process of selecting leaders of environmental organizations with the explicit goal of improving the GEG system as a whole.**
 - Invest in the selection of leaders for global environmental organizations—e.g., UNEP, key MEA secretariats, environmental funds, etc.—who explicitly support and have demonstrated a willingness to invest in system-wide GEG reform, including on key issues such as MEA clustering, financial coordination and transparency, and institutional harmonization. *The best—and possibly only—time to influence the leadership of these organizations is at the time of their selection.* If stated criteria for selection include the commitment to institutional harmonization and GEG system reform, candidates will be motivated to think about inter-institutional relations and beyond institutional fiefdoms. In particular, *candidates for heads of UNEP, MEA secretariats, environmental funds, etc., should be encouraged (if not required) to articulate their vision of how to enhance the coherence among various components of the GEG system and the steps they plan to take to make the GEG system more coherent.*
 - At a broader level, there is a need to continue, strengthen and build upon recent innovations in the selection of leaders for environmental organizations. To produce credible and competent leadership, the selection process should be transparent and rigorous. *The criteria should be a demonstrated track record of political as well as managerial competence.* In order to attract the best possible candidates, a wide net should be cast, both in terms of who might be considered and in terms of processes to identify eligible candidates (e.g., identification by states, by NGOs, by eminent individuals, by head-hunting agencies, through public discourse, etc.). While the process should not jeopardize the existing careers of potential candidates, it should include a process of wide review and consultation with multiple GEG stakeholders.
 - *One practical way of attracting the best candidates and enhancing GEG coherence might be to appoint one individual to be the executive head of more than one related organization, especially multiple MEA secretariats on related issues.* This is not without precedent (UNEP and HABITAT have had common leadership) and may be logistically feasible even if the secretariats are not co-located. Importantly, this might force a degree of coherence within that issue cluster, create an incentive structure to seek environmental synergies and reduce unnecessary turf battles.
- **Once selected, leaders of global environmental organizations should be given the independence and resources to lead their institutions with, and towards, excellence.**
 - Member States (much like board members in a corporate setting) should seek clarity, direction and detailed plans from the leadership of international environmental organizations but, beyond that, should provide these leaders with the ability to implement their plans. This would include *the ability to recruit the best people to work with them, including bringing in a senior*

management team of their choice with which they are comfortable and in whom they have confidence.

- Institutional leadership flows from the executive head, but is also a function of the senior management team within the organization. Heads of UNEP, MEA secretariats, and other international environmental agencies have the responsibility—and should have the authority—to *select the most competent and inspired management leadership within their organizations*.

Goal #2. Knowledge

Ultimately, the legitimacy of the GEG system comes from its performance (to be discussed later). Legitimacy also flows from the GEG system being seen as a knowledge-based and a knowledge-producing system. The goal of such a system is to ensure that global environmental policy is based on sound science and meaningful inclusion of the legitimate environmental interests of all key stakeholders, including developing and industrialized countries and relevant non-state actors.

In order to reestablish science as the basis of global environmental policy, institutions that make up the GEG system—and particularly UNEP, which is at the core of this system—should be seen by all as being among the first place to look towards when one needs to get authoritative science. This, indeed, was one of the founding purposes of UNEP. It should remain an enduring goal of the emerging GEG system. UNEP, as an institution, lost its credibility when it allowed its technical competence to be eroded. It needs to regain this credibility. Some useful steps in this direction would include:

- **UNEP should become a preeminent convener and catalyst of authoritative, cross-cutting and relevant science on issues related to the global environment.**
 - This does not mean that UNEP needs to turn itself into a research-only organization. However, it does mean that UNEP should be *catalyzing* the most cutting-edge scientific work on global environmental issues (as it sometimes has in the past). Technical competence and scientific prominence should be UNEP's key goals. Existing UNEP Collaborating Centres could play an important role in this process.
 - A first step in this direction would be *the creation of a highly independent, high-profile and high-level office of "Chief Scientist" within UNEP, staffed with scientists of international repute who can conceive, coordinate, convene and catalyze an ongoing program of cutting-edge scientific research and enquiry*. Not only should the world see UNEP as a source of authoritative environmental science, but leading scientists should view UNEP as the scientific collaborator of choice. The role of the UNEP Chief Scientist would be to use UNEP's convening power and platform to galvanize leading scientists and scholars outside of the GEG system (including within academia, NGOs and the private sector) to undertake relevant research and to then coordinate and synthesize the results of such research for policy-makers.
 - As the principal environmental advisor to the UN Secretary General, the UNEP Executive Director should then be able to provide the UN system and the world with authoritative scientific assessments of the state of the global environment, of ongoing policy initiatives (e.g., MEAs), and of unforeseen environmental challenges (e.g., the 2004 Asian Tsunami).
- **Strengthen and rationalize knowledge cooperation within the GEG system.**
 - There is an urgent need to rationalize the number of scientific bodies within the GEG system, and particularly the subsidiary bodies for scientific and technical advice (SBSTAs) of MEAs, whose activities have proliferated in recent years. In practice, many of these SBSTAs have turned into politicized forums and are often attended by negotiators rather than scientists. The proliferation of SBSTAs adds to negotiation fatigue and balkanizes otherwise related issues. *There is an urgent need to integrate various SBSTAs, reduce their number but enhance their scientific profile, and depoliticize them*. The goal is to have a smaller number of more integrated SBSTAs that can cultivate integrated scientific discourse and build scientific capacity (especially in developing countries and at regional levels). Even where clustering and uncluttering may be difficult for MEA negotiations, the case for clustering and issue-integration at the SBSTA level is compelling for scientific issue-linkage reasons alone.
 - Furthermore, *knowledge production within the GEG system should be made more inclusive by ensuring fair representation of developing country experts within global processes*, and also by building developing country capacity for meaningful participation in such processes. *Non-state actors should also be provided the opportunity to contribute to global knowledge creation and knowledge sharing*. NGOs as well as the private sector often have access to information and insights not available to states and can—and have in the past—contribute to the identification of innovative solutions to complex environmental problems.
- **Ensure the independence and authoritativeness of scientific assessments and research produced by various elements of the GEG system.**
 - Many international organizations (e.g., the World Bank, UNDP, World Health Organization, UNICEF, etc.) are known for producing timely, independent and cutting-edge policy research. UNEP, in particular, needs to emulate this model of *independent authoritative research*.
 - As a first step, the *Global Environment Outlook* process should be restructured into an integrated assessment—modelled in format as well as process after the *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment*—to be facilitated by UNEP but produced by independent multi-sectoral experts to periodically review: (a) the current state; (b) the future challenges; and (c) the performance of existing and emerging policy initiatives related to the global environment.
 - UNEP should also take a more active role and greater ownership of the numerous research initiatives that already carry its moniker (e.g., IPCC reports, the *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment*, *World Resources* reports, etc.). Additionally, it should seek closer collaboration with related UN reports, for example, the *Human Development Reports*.
 - UNEP should also become the repository and producer of timely topical reports on existing and emerging environmental challenges, and should be the convener of choice for topical integrated assessments in other areas that are modelled after the IPCC. All of this can only happen if the independence of the processes is maintained, and the process of research generation and political discussions are kept separate.

Goal #3. Coherence

The never-ending search for system-wide coherence has been a perennial challenge for the GEG system. In many respects this is an impossible challenge. After all, environment touches everything and, therefore, all international organizations have a role to play. To expect any single organization, least of all an under-resourced organization such as UNEP, to “coordinate” the environmental activities of all organizations in the international system has been a recipe for frustration. Coherence is also a

rather abused term in that it has come to mean different things to different people. We believe that coherence is, indeed, a key goal of the GEG system and the various organizations in the system should have a shared global environmental vision and should be seen to be moving in a common. *Coherence requires reasonable coordination and regular communication among organizations. However, it does not require a “super-organization” for the environment, nor does it require a central control mechanism to coordinate every environmental action of every organization in the international system.*

Important distinctions need to be made between at least three types of international organizations: (a) organizations whose primary and principal focus is on the environment (e.g., UNEP, GEF, MEA secretariats, etc.); (b) organizations with broad mandates of development project implementation, including the environment as a focus area (e.g., UNDP, the World Bank, regional development banks, etc.); and (c) organizations whose activities are related to the environment, but for whom environment is not the principal focus (UNESCO, UNICEF, WFP, ICAO, etc.). Different levels of coordination are required for different organizations. In general, a high level of regular coordination of goals and activities is required among the first group; reasonable coordination with regular information-sharing and joint priority-setting is desired between the first and second groups of organizations; and the goal for all three groups should be regular communication leading to reasonable coordination on a project-specific basis.

In this section we highlight some recommendations to address the coherence challenge at these various levels, but especially in relation to facilitating meaningful coordination among international environmental organizations:

- **The GMEF should be the principal high-level forum for political decision-making on strategic issues related to global environmental governance.**
 - There are currently too many “high-level” forums calling for the attention of key environmental decision-makers. Participation in many of these forums (for example, at various COPs) tends to be thin and is often less “high-level” than expected. *The Global Ministerial Environmental Forum (GMEF) should become the principal regular forum for high-level political decision-making on issues related to GEG.* Ministerial involvement at environmental negotiations should be less frequent but more meaningful in that (a) it should be required only when there are important political decisions to be made; and (b) wherever feasible, economic and development ministers should also be included.
 - The GMEF, because it includes ministers charged with all environmental issues, should take a more active role in reviewing the state of, and setting the direction for, global environmental governance, not only at UNEP but across all global environmental organizations as a whole. Therefore, MEA secretariats and other relevant organizations should be asked to present their progress (towards actual environmental improvements) at GMEF meetings.
- **A strengthened UNEP should serve as the hub of a coherent GEG system.**
 - *A strengthened UNEP should become the hub of a coherent GEG system with the UNEP Executive Director as the principal advisor to the UN Secretary General on all matters related with the environment.* There is no need for a “super-organization” for the environment. However, given its mandate, history and experience, UNEP should clearly remain the central organization for all matters related to the environment. In order to do so, UNEP will need to revert to its original focus of technical competence and away from more operational projects that are better implemented by other agencies.
 - One step would be to upgrade UNEP into an “Agency,” rather than a “Programme,” with the concomitant ability to assess its own budget (more on UNEP funding below). This does not imply that all organizations have to somehow be placed “under” UNEP, nor should this entail serious reformatting of UNEP’s existing structure. However, it does mean that *UNEP should be given the resources and the ability to “coordinate” the system that it is supposedly at the centre of (especially in terms of coordinating other environmental organizations).* UNEP’s coordination mandate should be realistically reassessed and clarified. Issues on which UNEP can become the lead system-wide agency in terms of coordination would include capacity-building, periodic reporting on the performance of the GEG system, development and maintenance of a Financial Tracking System for the Environment, and the facilitation of independent and authoritative knowledge assessments (IPCC, Biodiversity Assessment, Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, etc.).
 - UNEP must not be seen to be in competition with the very organizations it is supposed to be coordinating. *UNEP should focus on broad policy issues, capacity building, and knowledge generation. It should not be involved in managing projects.* Other agencies in the international system are much better equipped to manage development projects and UNEP should only serve in an advisory capacity on these.
- **Efforts to combat MEA proliferation should be accelerated.**
 - Better policy coherence requires better horizontal integration of GEG. First, there should be a *commitment to deal with new issues in the most appropriate existing forums rather than creating new instruments and institutions.* Second, *the experiments underway on MEA clustering (e.g., chemical treaties) should be supported, and other issue areas should be encouraged to follow suit.* This could include back-to-back meetings of related COPs; joint meetings of technical bodies (see above); joint or adjacent secretariats (where possible and including virtual colocation); finding permanent rather than rotating venues for meetings; appointing joint executive heads of multiple and related MEA secretariats (see above); etc. Both the duration and frequency of COPs could be streamlined by making the high-level segments less frequent (once every three years, for example) so that more focus can be placed on implementation and performance (this might even spur higher level participation in these forums that are currently too numerous and too frequent to command the attention of the most important decision-makers).
 - Importantly, there is a need to *check the expansion of the mandates of MEA secretariats.* The role of the secretariats should be to facilitate the negotiation processes and they should not be distracted from this. For example, activities related to science, capacity building and conference services can be appropriately outsourced to other parts of the GEG system. It should be clear that the autonomy of the legal agreements does not imply autonomy of the secretariats.
 - *Donors could encourage MEA collaboration and clustering by providing a financial incentive (additional funding) for those who pursue it.* This is especially pertinent since MEA clustering and collaboration can lead to significant cost savings.
 - Experiments already underway on MEA clustering (e.g., chemical treaties), should be encouraged and other issue areas should be given incentives to follow suit. Where clustering is not possible or feasible in the immediate term, less frequent but more result-focused meetings of the COPs should be encouraged to combat negotiating fatigue, reduce costs and free up time for implementation.
 - Finally, *the reporting requirements of various MEAs should be streamlined, clustered and focused on implementation.* Reports required from countries should be less frequent, more integrated and also focused on implementation. Additionally, *MEA secretariats should be required to periodically produce and present synthesis reports to the GMEF* highlighting how the implementation of the goals and targets of that particular MEA is progressing and what future implementation challenges are

envisaged.

- The overall purpose of these recommendations is to *begin moving the system from its current negotiation orientation to an implementation and performance orientation* by making MEA negotiations more focused, less tiring and better integrated.
- **The UN Environmental Management Group (EMG) should be restructured to meet the different coordination needs of different agencies.**
 - The EMG was, and remains, a good idea but has never been able to generate the type of high-level participation that its design called for. It is unlikely to do so, partly because it is already too large and has too many disparate agencies, and largely because there is little clarity on the purpose of coordination. While all the agencies represented in the EMG have a stake in the global environment, they have very different stakes. *EMG should be strengthened in order to meet its mandate, it should have adequate resources and it should seek a clear vision of the purpose of system-wide coordination.* In essence, organizations in the system will move towards coordination only if the incentives for such coordination are real, and are clearly seen by all organizations.
 - Structurally, this would include providing the EMG secretariat with the needed resources and staff, developing close working relationships between EMG and other UN inter-agency processes and particularly with the United Nations Development Group, encouraging organizations other than UNEP to also take an active role in EMG governance, and to seek greater participation of non-UN agencies in EMG deliberations.
 - Functionally, the EMG needs to be strengthened in ways that enable its member agencies to see tangible benefits from their participation in it. This will require the EMG to *develop flexible ways of working that can be tailored to the needs of different types of organizations.* EMG members whose principal focus is environmental should be brought together for more detailed coordination around their goals and activities; an issue management focus should be emphasized to facilitate better coordination between agencies working on similar or related issues; reliable channels for regular information sharing should be explored; and careful thought should be put into ensuring that member agencies do not see EMG participation as an unnecessary and unrewarding burden on their time and effort.
 - Finally, *the overarching purpose of the EMG should be to build system-wide policy coherence.* One way to force such discussions is to task the EMG with reporting annually to the GMEF on how the environmental policy directions being pursued by member agencies add up to a coherent system-wide direction.

Goal #4. Performance

Although it is self-evident, it is worth repeating and reinforcing the fact that the ultimate purpose of the GEG system is to improve the global environmental condition. To achieve environmental performance goals, the institutions that make up the GEG system should also seek excellence in their own performance. This means that the institutions that make up the GEG system should be well-managed; they should have the resources they need and should use these resources efficiently; and they should be effective in implementation.

The challenge of performance boils down to the challenge of implementation. It, therefore, requires critical inputs not only from international institutions but also from Member States. Moreover, it requires looking at GEG vertically; from the global to the local levels. While much of the GEG debate has focused on streamlining the GEG system horizontally, an implementation and performance focus also demands that attention be paid to the vertical dimension. Some steps that can spur a greater emphasis on institutional and environmental performance, include:

- **Redirect GEG efforts toward investment that facilitates compliance with and implementation of global environmental policy.**
 - One goal of better global environmental governance is to assist countries, especially developing countries, in identifying their environmental priorities and to “feed” this information into national and international policy processes. This requires *a serious reevaluation of the capacity building being provided by various components of the GEG system.*
 - There are far *too many initiatives in building negotiating capacities and too few on building policy development and implementation capacities.* There is also obvious duplication in capacity building initiatives. More emphasis should be placed on building capacities for identifying environmental needs within country documents (e.g., Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, etc.), the development of domestic policy instruments to support global policy agreements, and the implementation of global commitments at the regional, national and local levels.
 - This will require a more regional focus and presence, which can be developed by strengthening UNEP’s regional offices, giving them the resources to fulfill their capacity development mandates, co-locating them with UN Regional Commissions and converting them into substantive support secretariats for Regional Ministerial Forums which, in turn, should be focused on policy implementation and compliance.
 - There is also *a need to encourage environmental jurisprudence and dispute resolution at all levels.* This does not require the creation of new environmental judicial infrastructures. Existing programs, such as the UNEP Judges Training Program can be strengthened as a way to promote the use of existing judicial bodies and instruments for environmental jurisprudence.
 - *The trend towards the creation of compliance committees and dispute resolution mechanisms within and across MEAs should be strengthened* and incentives provided to encourage the development of cluster-wide compliance and dispute resolution systems.
 - Indicators, targets and assessments should be used to gauge and monitor progress towards environmental performance. *Environmental organizations, including MEA secretariats, should be required to report on environmental performance to the GMEF.*
 - Finally, as discussed earlier, the many reports that Member States have to submit to various institutions (e.g., CSD, various MEA COPs) should be streamlined into *fewer, more integrated reports that focus mostly on implementation.* MEA secretariats should be required to periodically prepare and present implementation status reports to the GMEF highlighting how that particular MEA’s goals and targets are being implemented and what future implementation challenges are emerging. The overall focus of reporting from the secretariats themselves should be on whether the goals and targets of the MEAs are being achieved and whether and how this is improving the state of the global environment.
- **Invest in management improvements within environmental organizations, especially UNEP.**
 - Member States are, at least partially, responsible for the weak management infrastructure at many international organizations, including international environmental organizations. UNEP, in particular, has been saddled with a huge and expanding mandate without the necessary financial and human resources. *The first step in improving UNEP’s management performance is for*

Member States to provide it with a stable, predictable and adequate source of funding.

- It has often been suggested that UNEP should be given the ability to assess its own budget. This may be useful, but not enough. A consortium of key donors—led by countries desirous of meaningful GEG reform—should commit to providing a semblance of stability and predictability to UNEP budget, at least for a period of around five years. Such a consortium of donors should take the lead in committing to (and encourage other countries to commit to) separate caches of long-term institutional funding and shorter-term issue funding. While the latter tends to be tied to the immediate political priorities of individual donors, the former is necessary if organizations are to plan a coherent budget based on enduring global policy priorities.
- To the extent possible, UNEP should also be encouraged to explore innovative sources of financing. While inadequate financing is one source of management inefficiencies, it is not the only source.
- For its part, *UNEP needs a major management overhaul, possibly beginning with an institutional management review and including a review of its hiring practices and budgetary and financial processes.* A key goal should be to strengthen human resources within UNEP. Hiring processes should be made transparent; personnel at all levels should be selected on the basis of demonstrated merit; leading professionals from academia, NGOs, and business should be encouraged to work at UNEP for short stints to instill fresh ideas and innovative approaches into the organization; and long-term UNEP staff should receive more management training, stronger performance incentives, and be subject to higher levels of accountability and performance review.
- Although these recommendations are directed specifically towards UNEP, they are relevant to and should also be applied to other environmental organizations.
- **The resources available in the GEG system should be utilized more effectively for environmental improvement.**
 - The GEG system clearly needs more resources if it is to make a serious difference in the state of global environmental quality. But it also needs to *use the resources that are available more efficiently and effectively.*
 - For example, the many national communications and reports that are currently required by various MEAs, not only consume valuable human resources but each national report can cost around US\$350,000–500,000 (an estimated 70,000 hours of consulting time are spent on producing these reports in a small industrialized country). *Streamlining and clustering MEA reports* not only makes eminent substantive sense, it can free up much needed human and financial resources that could then be diverted to implementation of the very same MEAs.
 - An immediate step towards financial effectiveness would be to *create a Financial Tracking System that keeps count of the various multilateral and bilateral resources flowing through the GEG system.* Such a system could be maintained by UNEP but will require earnest inputs from the EMG and from donors. A transparent system will not only be able to highlight areas of financial need and of financial duplication but would also institute greater donor confidence and improved resource allocation.
 - Finally, as with MEAs, *the proliferation of individual treaty funds should be checked, to the extent feasible.* While having a multiplicity of funding sources has its benefits, too much balkanization will make the pot in each fund smaller, will raise the cost of managing each fund, and will discourage issue synergies. Joint funds for related issues should be encouraged and the coverage of, and resources in, the GEF should be expanded.

Goal #5. Mainstreaming

One important measure of the success of global environmental policy is the extent to which environmental concerns are incorporated into other arenas of international policy and action. Indeed, the entire concept of sustainable development is a testimony to the desire, as well as the necessity, of doing so.

Significant headway has, in fact, been made in mainstreaming environmental concerns into other arenas of international policy and into non-environmental institutions. Civil society has also been brought into environmental decision-making processes and has played an important role in institutions for global environmental governance. However, much more can and needs to be done on both counts, especially as we move from the policy articulation phase into the policy implementation phase. Some steps that might enhance environmental mainstreaming include:

- **The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) should revert to its original design intent and focus on integrating environment into development.**
 - The CSD was originally designed to ensure that the Rio promise of integrating environment and development was fulfilled and as a forum that evaluated the implementation of *Agenda 21*. It was also envisaged as a high-level forum that would bring economic and environmental decision-makers together. While the CSD has been successful as a regular forum for sustainable development discussions and brings together a wide array of civil society actors together with government delegates, it has not been successful in ensuring the implementation of *Agenda 21* or in bringing together economic and environmental ministers. *There is an urgent need to revitalize the CSD, to realign it to its original intent of mainstreaming environment and development decisions, and to elevate it so that key development decision-makers participate in it.*
 - There is a need to return the CSD to its original purpose, i.e., to turn it into a forum where environmental and economic decision-makers meet. This is not happening now and there is the danger that it will become another “environmental” forum rather than retaining its “sustainable development emphasis” The CSD is already a part of the ECOSOC, which is the key arena for all discussions pertaining to development issues in the UN system and has the ability to influence the work of UN development agencies. *The goal of the CSD should be to influence the ECOSOC and, thereby, development agencies within the UN family.* This would reorient it towards the development discussions and turn it into the principal forum that brings development and environment concerns together in the context of sustainable development.
- **Proactively prepare for the eventual incorporation of environmental concerns into new areas of international policy.**
 - In recent years, *environmental concerns have increasingly found their way into other areas of international policy.* This process continues today and is likely to continue. Environmental issues are now squarely part of the current round of trade negotiations within the WTO. They are likely to be of significant concern in future negotiations on developing an international investment regime as the connections between environment and security are becoming increasingly evident and a subject of international discussions, and the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has demonstrated that environmental priorities are an integral part of and can no longer be de-linked from broader development concerns.
 - *Institutions of global environmental governance, and particularly UNEP, need to be proactive in identifying these existing and emerging connections and in setting the agenda for how these linkages are framed and discussed in international policy.* There is a particularly critical role for knowledge generation in this regard. A major focus on research and knowledge generation convened by UNEP should be on these emerging connections so that these discussions and possible policy options are framed through an environmental lens. Two areas where environmental research is critically important today relate to (a) trade and

environment; and (b) the MDGs and environment.

- **Expand the role of non-state actors in GEG through a more inclusive and more integrated Civil Society Forum to be held in conjunction with GMEF meetings.**
 - The Civil Society Forum, held in conjunction with GMEF meetings, should be made more inclusive in terms of the number and diversity of non-state actors who participate, and it should be integrated more fully into GMEF discussions. In format as well as participation, it should seek to emulate NGO and private sector involvement in annual CSD meetings. *The goal should be to make the Civil Society Forum a permanent networking forum where non-state actors can interact with each other and with governments to share experiences, innovations and ideas about improving the GEG system.*
 - The Civil Society Forum should provide ample space and opportunities for non-state actors—NGOs as well as private sector—to interact with governments, formally and informally. The Forum should be *an opportunity for non-state actors to report on their innovations and activities and also to seek reports from governments on the implementation of their GEG responsibilities.* There should also be formal opportunities for civil society representatives to directly present their views to GMEF meetings.

A Last Word

We have focused here on the most important steps that need to, and can, be taken in the short term. These, of course, only cover the most pressing and most immediate needs. There are a whole array of more elaborate steps that also need to be thought through. However, broader reform tends to be longer-term, politically challenging and is often dependent on structural changes in the larger international system. Such broader change is necessary, even critical. However, it must not be turned into an excuse for inaction that that which can be done in the short term.

We do not wish to undermine the importance of longer-term and larger-scale change. But we do wish to emphasize that the important and immediate steps that can and need to be taken do not need to wait for longer-term systemic reform. Indeed, these more immediate steps may well be necessary steps to those larger goals, and these might be instrumental in creating the framework conditions for longer-term systemic change.

To conclude, we believe that GEG reform cannot be restricted only to a few organizations in the GEG system. It needs to be systemic, even in the short term. That means, at the very least, that it must focus on the key environmental organizations in the system—and especially on the relationships between them. In the final analysis, all reform must be designed for—and ultimately evaluated by—the positive impact it has on actual environmental performance.

This is a chapter from *Global Environmental Governance: A Reform Agenda (e-book)*.
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