

**Second meeting of the Consultative Group
of Ministers or High-level Representatives
on International Environmental Governance**
Helsinki, 21-23 November 2010

Executive Note

The Co-Chairs of the Consultative Group

The executive note

1. The Co-Chairs of the Consultative Group of Ministers or High-Level Representatives on international environmental governance (hereinafter referred to as the Consultative Group) recognize that the world is facing significant challenges with regard to environmental sustainability and that the international environmental governance system needs to produce better environmental outcomes through collective action. The Co-Chairs, therefore, acknowledge that it is within this context that the Consultative Group was set up to examine and tackle the challenges faced by the international environmental governance system.

2. The Co-Chairs also recognize that the political will exists to tackle challenges associated with global environmental sustainability; this is evident from the financial commitments that have been made recently, for example, with regard to REDD-plus and the fifth replenishment of the Global Environment Facility. And, while acknowledging that not all these financial resources constitute new and additional resources, the Co-Chairs recognize that there are clear indications of willingness to deal with environmental sustainability issues and a great opportunity to build on this political will.

3. The Co-Chairs note that the process so far has been guided by the principle that “form follows function”, and it is in this context that the First Consultative Group, including through the Belgrade Process, identified a core set of priority areas and elements. The Belgrade Process focused primarily on functions and clearly outlined some key components of a system-wide response to the broader reform process. The Co-Chairs believe that it is in this context that the process is now beginning to take shape.

4. The “Nairobi-Helsinki” Consultative Group process continues to build upon and engage in rigorous discussions on the broader reform process. A status and gap analysis has been undertaken with a view to proposing a way forward. In this regard, the Co-Chairs recognize that there has been a two-tiered approach:

(a) A focus on *functional* aspects of the broader reform process dealing with United Nations system-wide responses that will result in greater efficiency and more significant impacts and outcomes;

(b) A focus on the way forward in addressing *form-related* aspects of the broader reform process, as it has become clear that in the past two years the focus has been on the functional aspects of broader reform.

It is the Co-chairs' view that in identifying a way forward within the context of this two-tiered approach, the Helsinki meeting should focus on functions dealing with United Nations system-wide responses and outline some indicative priority areas that would deal with form as it relates to institutional developments. It is important for the Consultative Group's discussion to look beyond UNEP to focus on the collective impact on environmental sustainability of the United Nations international environmental governance system. The Co-Chairs see this as the best way to fulfill the mandate that they have been given by Governing Council decision SSXI/1 and to provide inputs into the preparatory process for the Rio + 20 conference.

5. The Co-Chairs therefore suggest that the Consultative Group during its second meeting consider:

(a) **Function-related aspects of broader reform**, which should be aimed at system-wide responses that collectively address the international environmental governance system in order to create greater efficiency and effectiveness, enhance coherence, and maximize investment and effective responses to countries' needs. These could include United Nations system-wide responses to, for example, a science-policy interface; a strategy for environmental sustainability; the clustering of multilateral environmental agreements; the widening and deepening of the funding base for the environment, including a financial tracking system; a capacity-building framework; and strategic engagement at the regional level.

(b) **Form-related aspects of broader institutional reform**: the Co-Chairs regard the need for developing a global and authoritative voice for environmental

sustainability as a key outcome for the international environmental governance reform process, and recognize that some indicative work needs to be done to tackle the issue of institutional reform. Without such reform it may not be possible to provide coherent and effective global leadership for environmental sustainability.

During the Belgrade Process various options for broader institutional reforms were put forward, including the following:

- (i) Enhancing UNEP;
- (ii) Establishing a new umbrella organization for sustainable development;
- (iii) Establishing a specialized agency such as a world environment organization;
- (iv) Possible reform of ECOSOC and the Commission on Sustainable Development; and
- (v) Enhancing institutional reforms and streamlining present structures.

It is the Co-Chairs' view that two of these options, namely (ii) establishing a new umbrella organization for sustainable development and (iv) possible reform of ECOSOC and the Commission on Sustainable Development, would best be addressed in the context of the General Assembly and the Rio + 20 process.

The Consultative Group may therefore wish to focus on the three remaining options – (i) enhancing UNEP, (iii) establishing a specialized agency such as a world environment organization, and (v) enhancing institutional reforms and streamlining present structures – as a contribution to the theme of an institutional framework for sustainable development.

6. Finally, it is the Co-Chairs' view that the work and outcomes of the Consultative Group play a significant role in demonstrating the existence of political will to take on critical responsibilities with regard to collective global environmental sustainability, and to seize related opportunities. The Co-Chairs believe that the Consultative Group will therefore need to identify ways and means of sustaining the momentum of this process to ensure that there are clear leadership and commitment at the highest levels and that the outcomes justify the collective investment in the process.