

Strengthening international cooperation on the environmental aspects of emergency response and preparedness

The Governing Council,

Reaffirming the inherent linkages between environmental, humanitarian and development outcomes, in addition to the need to identify and address environmental risks linked to natural and man-made disasters as defined in subprogramme 2, on disasters and conflicts, of the programme of work of the United Nations Environment Programme,¹

Welcoming the role of the United Nations Environment Programme as the focal point for environment within needs assessments carried out in the United Nations system and within the humanitarian coordination system through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee cluster approach,

Noting with concern the extent to which the current limitations of international emergency response systems could unintentionally amplify the environmental impacts of natural and man-made disasters, and recognizing that greater efforts and support are needed to assist affected countries, upon their request, to respond to and manage environmental risks and impacts,

Acknowledging the need to tackle the underlying factors that contribute to an increased risk of disaster,

Expressing concern at the possible future impacts of climate change, such as increases in the frequency, intensity and unpredictability of extreme hydrological and meteorological events, which could contribute to corresponding increases in the number and scale of disasters and the need for international assistance for prevention, response and recovery,

Taking into account the vulnerability of developing countries, including the most vulnerable, such as small island developing States and least developed countries, to natural hazards and the environmental impacts of natural and man-made disasters, which could undermine the attainment of internationally agreed development goals such as the Millennium Development Goals,

Recalling General Assembly resolutions 44/224 of 22 December 1989, on international cooperation in the monitoring, assessment and anticipation of environmental threats and in assistance in cases of environmental emergency, and 46/182 of 19 December 1991 and 58/114 of 17 December 2003 on strengthening the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance by the United Nations,

Recalling also its decisions 21/17 of 9 February 2001 and 22/8 of 7 February 2003 on further improvement of environmental emergency prevention, preparedness, assessment, response and mitigation,

Noting that the medium-term strategy for the period 2010–2013 identifies disasters and conflicts as one of six cross-cutting thematic priorities of the United Nations Environment Programme,

Welcoming the continued collaboration between the United Nations Environment Programme and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, through their Joint Environment Unit, as the principal multilateral tool for mobilizing and coordinating international response to environmental emergencies,

¹ UNEP/GC.26/13.

Recalling also the Hyogo Declaration and the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015 adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 60/195 of 22 December 2005, which outline relevant principles for disaster risk reduction and disaster preparedness at all levels,

Noting with appreciation the development of specialized expertise within the United Nations Environment Programme on mainstreaming environmental issues in humanitarian operations to minimize possible environmental impacts and ensure that they do no harm with regard to longer-term vulnerability and development,

Recalling also that, while it is a primary responsibility of Governments to establish, where possible, adequate structures, procedures and capacities for responding to environmental risks, preventive action and preparedness should always be prioritized as the means of dealing with such risks stemming from natural and man-made disasters,

1. *Requests* the Executive Director:

- (a) To coordinate, in cooperation with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, within the coming 12 months, the preparation of a baseline document on current roles, responsibilities and divisions of labour between international organizations involved in responding to environmental emergencies, identifying key gaps and opportunities;
 - (b) To facilitate, in cooperation with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, a process over the coming three years on the basis of the above-mentioned document to ensure that key organizations involved in responding to environmental emergencies have a clear and mutually agreed understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities in various scenarios;
 - (c) To contribute to efforts to monitor and evaluate the risks of potential natural and man-made disasters;
2. *Decides*, in cooperation with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme and other relevant actors, to continue to contribute to strengthening the United Nations response mechanism for the coordination and mobilization of international assistance to countries facing environmental risks and impacts from natural and man-made disasters, through, in particular, the disasters and conflicts subprogramme of the programme of work of the United Nations Environment Programme and the collaborative partnership between the Programme and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs;
3. *Requests* the Executive Director to continue to raise awareness of and promote cooperation on the environmental dimensions of natural and man-made disasters and of the environmental implications of humanitarian and other international response;
4. *Also requests* the Executive Director to continue, in close cooperation with the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and other actors, through the implementation of the programme of work of the United Nations Environment Programme, to strengthen integrated approaches to reducing the risk of natural and man-made disasters and adapting to the impacts of climate change,

5. *Invites* Governments, international organizations, international financial institutions and other relevant stakeholders to provide countries, particularly developing countries, with technological support, capacity-building and resources for prevention, preparedness and response;
6. *Invites* Governments to provide adequate support, including financial resources, for the effective mainstreaming of environmental needs in humanitarian response planning and operations and to provide in kind resources, including seconded personnel, to the United Nations Environment Programme and the collaborative partnership between the United Nations Environment Programme and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to enable them efficiently to assist countries, in particular developing countries,
2. *Also invites* Governments to improve the linkages and coordination between emergency response, early recovery and development actors from the onset of emergency response;
3. *Further invites* Governments to improve the involvement of local and regional actors in prevention, preparedness and response to the environmental aspects of natural and man-made disasters in consultation, as appropriate, with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other relevant actors;
4. *Requests* the Executive Director to bring the outcomes of the forthcoming ninth meeting of the International Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies to the attention of the Governing Council at its twenty-seventh session;
5. *Also requests* the Executive Director to organize, in consultation with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and other relevant partners and within available resources, regular expert meetings on environmental emergencies to promote the application of voluntary guidelines for environmental emergencies among member States;
6. *Encourages* Governments, international organizations, international financial institutions and relevant stakeholders in a position to do so to contribute to the Trust Fund for Environmental Emergencies of the United Nations Environment Programme to support developing countries in building their capacity to prevent, respond effectively to and manage the environmental impacts and risks of natural and man-made disasters.