

Statement by Hossein Moeini (Islamic Republic of Iran), on behalf of the G77 & China, at the Fourth Session of the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Group of Ministers or their Representatives on International Environmental Governance

Montreal, 30 November 2001

Mr. President, Honorable Ministers, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a great honor and pleasure for me, to express the views of Group of 77 & China at this august gathering. At the outset, I would like to express our appreciation to you Mr. President, for the introduction of the paper to this meeting. Your dedication and commitment has always been a source of encouragement for all of us to actively participate in the IEG discussion. I would also like to congratulate Dr. Topfer, distinguished Executive Director of UNEP for his re-election and thank him and his capable staff for their tireless efforts in preparation of this meeting in a very well-organized and transparent manner.

Mr. President,

The Group of 77 & China attaches high importance to the IEG process and has been actively involved since the beginning of this discussion. We had very useful and constructive discussion over the past three meetings of the IEG and the views of the Group has consistently stated in those meetings. Obviously, they are as relevant now as they were then and there is no need to repeat them here. At this stage of discussion, we require to be more focused and specific and, therefore, I beg your indulgence for making a long statement. In this context, the Group would like to express its positions with regard to the second part of your paper which contains recommendations as the proposed outcome of our work. Needless to say, the first part of the text requires to be improved in different places.

Let me go directly to the chapeau of paragraph 10. We would like to reiterate that R/53/242 is the framework of any discussion regarding GMEF and EMG. Having only two meetings of the GMEF makes it too premature to decide on the expansion of GMEF role. We need to have sufficient material at hand before taking any decision on the expansion of the GMEF role. We should keep the role of GMEF consistent with what has been anticipated in resolution 53/242 which is "reviewing important and emerging policy issues in the field of environment". Even more, GMEF in performing this role should give due consideration to maintaining the role of the CSD. That is to say, not to substitute it or conflict with its mandate. It is quite difficult to reconcile what we have agreed for CSD, as its mandate, and the idea of enhancing the role of GMEF to become an umbrella policy forum in the UN system since CSD is the main body for high-level policy debate on sustainable development. This put the CSD in a position to have a comprehensive debate on all components of sustainable development and enable it to provide integrated approach for achieving sustainable development. Sustainable development includes environment and, in R/47/191 which sets the mandate of CSD, it is apparent that the tasks and functions of CSD is to monitor the implementation of Agenda 21 which covers environmental, economic and social dimension of sustainable development. In addition, we believe discussion on strengthening GMEF could only be done at the time of addressing ways of strengthening the institutional framework for sustainable development and evaluating and defining the role and the program of work of the CSD in the Prep-Com of WSSD.

Regarding sub paragraphs 10(a) and (b) and as it has been pointed out in the Resolution, GMEF is the special session of the UNEP Governing Council. Therefore, there is no distinction GMEF and GC. They are the same body with the same membership. Consequently, there is no need for discussion of the universal membership of GMEF and different functions or segment for the GMEF or amendment to the rules of procedure of UNEP. On sub paragraph 10(C) and the relation of the GMEF with other MEAs, organizations and GEF, there is no an independent role for GMEF as such. The prerogative of the relevant decision-making bodies of MEAs and GEF as the only bodies that review their overall performance should be respected. In addition, any debate on

providing MEAs, GEF... with the views of GMEF, in any form, would require prior consideration and approval of decision-making bodies of the relevant conventions and organizations. Furthermore, making cross-cutting recommendations by GMEF, which is supposed to deal with only environmental component, to other bodies whose areas of competent are more comprehensive than the GMEF, seems to be not the right option.

On sub paragraph 10(d), we always welcome the contribution of the major groups and civil society in different debate. However, involvement of civil society is a system-wide issue which is being considered in the UN and is being reviewed to achieve agreed intergovernmental modalities. Therefore, we believe until achieving such agreement in the UN, discussion like the one referred to in sub paragraph (D) prejudices the outcome of main debate and should be avoided.

Referring to sub-paragraph 10(e), we believe that UNEP seat at Nairobi as well as UNON should be strengthened by utilizing it more increasingly. Therefore, GMEF as the special session of the UNEP/GC should hold its meetings in Nairobi. It is obvious that any part of a program cannot have more prerogatives than the program itself, therefore, GMEF, as a part of UNEP, should also report to the GA through ECOSOC.

On 10(f) and as we indicated earlier, providing advice, guidance ... to other institutions, organizations... needs their prior approval.

With regard to sub paragraph 10(g) and its sub-bullets and as indicated above, we do not see any division between GMEF and UNEP/GC. Since they are the same body, there is also no need for division of work among them. Realization of the proposed arrangements in 10(g) would bring so many confusions and conflicts between GMEF, CSD, UNEP/GC, and CPR... It also has huge financial implications which require adequate consideration. Furthermore, we believe in enhancing the scientific capacity of UNEP we should take utmost benefit from the potentials of existing bodies and avoid establishing new bodies which impose additional financial burden at this very critical time.

On sub paragraph 10(h), it is worth-mentioning that the role of the EMG as stipulated in R/53/242 is interagency coordination. EMG is not a mechanism for setting agenda for the GMEF, out of the authority of the COPs. It can only follow the decisions of the COPs. In addition, making recommendations to other intergovernmental fora in economic, social and sustainable development fields, as stated earlier falls neither within the competence of EMG nor the GMEF.

Mr. President,

As regards to section 2 paragraph 11 and the chapeau of paragraph 12, we support strengthening the role, authority and financial situation of UNEP as provided in R/53/242. However, I would like to reiterate that we are neither in agreement with UNEP becoming a specialized agency nor with the creation of the World Environment Organization. We believe UNEP potentials need to be further utilized.

In regard to 12(b) and comparing the options of agreed non-binding scale of assessments and multi-year pledges, we would like to state that we are more convinced with the option of multi-year pledges.

On paragraph 13, although the availability of information is important however, means of implementation, as being used in sustainable development negotiations and documents, represents more comprehensive terms of capacity building, technology transfer and financial resources and is not limited to the availability of information. In our view, UNEP's increased role in capacity building and technology transfer deserves favorable consideration. We proposed in IEG-3 that an intergovernmental expert body on the transfer of environmentally sound technology within UNEP be established which seems has not been reflected in the text. As it was indicated earlier, the Group has not yet been convinced on the necessity of developing an

independent and authoritative scientific assessment and monitoring capacity for emerging issues. There are several scientific bodies which their capacities and potentials have to be utilized. In addition, the financial implication of creation of new bodies has to be fully reviewed.

Regarding paragraph 14, UNEP's role in GEF could be enhanced, in particular through strengthening the role of STAP. UNEP's enhanced role within GEF should ensure to bring "domestic environmental benefits" to the GEF-funded projects by applying the principle of "incremental cost" in a more flexible manner. We want UNEP to be strengthened within its existing mandate but there is a need for financial resources. Obviously, strengthening the role of UNEP within the GEF and in the areas mentioned in paragraph 14 should not affect the actual replenishment amount which is allocated to the implementation of the projects in GEF four focal areas. The resources needed for strengthening of UNEP by the must be additional to the GEF replenished resources. As we stated earlier, GEF is receiving guidance only from the COPs and its decision making bodies (Council and the Assembly).

Mr. President,

On section 3 paragraphs 15 and 16 and the chapeau of 17, the Group during IEG-3 expressed its general support for the concept of "pilot clustering" upon the approval of the respective COPs of MEAs. We find some merit in the proposal. There are areas like reporting, scientific assessment...which clustering could enhance greatly the efficiency of the work. It could also save financial resources. But on 17(a) and (b) and the question of who is going to decide on clustering, we consider it out of the existing role of the GMEF. However, we are in agreement with the imperative of seeking the views of relevant MEAs.

On section 4, it seems to us that the title of this section and the separation of environment and sustainable development is not a right insertion. Environment is one of the components of sustainable development and therefore, it is already covered in that term. Although paragraph 18 refers to some of the needs of developing countries, we think the way that this paragraph has been drafted, does not reflect this fact that the production and consumption patterns in developed countries is the cause of global environment degradation.

Regarding paragraph 19, 20 and 21, while we agree in principle with the trust of these paragraphs, we would like to seek more clarification on "strategic partnership" between UNEP and GEF. In addition, UNEP upon the request of the national governments could have the role stated in paragraph 21. Obviously, the coordination of international organization activities at national level rests with UNDP.

On section 5 and the role of EMG, the R/53/242 recognizes the role of interagency coordination of the EMG which is quite acceptable for us. However, we are not in agreement with the expansion of this role. The reason is quite simple. We need to receive more information on the work of the EMG since it has only two meetings. EMG should report to UNEP as well as the CSD. There is also the need for EMG to cooperate with other existing coordination body on sustainable development within the UN. In addition, EMG membership also requires improvement.

And finally with regard to section 6, since R/53/242 is the framework of our work there should be a clear reference to this resolution in this section. We can go along with the whole paragraph as long as it fits with R/53/242 and the mandate of UNEP.

In conclusion Mr. President, let me once again reiterate our conviction for active participation and involvement in the deliberation of this meeting and the entire process of IEG.

I thank you very much Mr. President.