

Terms of Reference of the Environment Management Group

Background

The Environment Management Group was established in 2001 pursuant to the General Assembly resolution [53/242](#), paragraph 5, which supported the proposal of the Secretary-General to establish an environmental management group for the purpose of enhancing United Nations system-wide inter-agency coordination related to specific issues in the field of environment and human settlements.

Mandate

Taking into account the mandates of the relevant United Nations system entities and other inter-agency mechanisms such as the UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) and its subsidiary bodies, the Environment Management Group is entrusted with the following responsibilities:

- To facilitate an effective, coordinated and flexible United Nations system response and joint action aimed at finding solutions to important and newly emerging specific issues of environmental and human settlements concern in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, mainly through an issue management approach.
- To promote inter-linkages, encourage timely and relevant exchange of data and information on specific issues and compatibility of different approaches to finding solutions to those common problems, contribute to the synergy and complementarity among and between activities of its members in the fields of environment and human settlements, i.a. through the implementation of the System-Wide Framework of Strategies on the Environment, and hence act in a complementary manner and add value to existing United Nations system-wide inter-agency cooperation.
- To promote coordination and information exchange among its members with regard to advancing the environmental and social sustainability of UN operations, facilities, programs, projects and policies and improving the environmental management of UN agencies.

Objectives

In fulfilling its mandate, the Group shall aim at attaining the following objectives:

To identify, address and promote the application of cross-sectoral solutions in order to collectively resolve specific problems, issues and tasks on the environmental and human settlements agenda requiring enhanced inter-agency cooperation in a given time-frame through facilitating effective and collaborative involvement of the relevant United Nations system agencies, programmes and organs and of other potential partners, as appropriate;

To provide a forum for a structured and timely exchange of relevant knowledge and information on emerging problems and issues in the field of environment and human settlements geared at finding collectively the most effective approach to the solution of the new tasks;

To assist in the promotion of system-wide policy coherence, synergy and collaborative and flexible approaches to environmental and human settlements issues in the United Nations system, including through the implementation of the System-Wide Framework of Strategies on the Environment (SWFS), and to enhance the environmental and human settlement perspectives, in particular their normative analytical and operational aspects, in the work of United Nations system organizations;

To facilitate, in this vein, the work of UN agencies in carrying out their responsibilities to support the integration and implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals;

To bring the contributions of EMG Members to the UN Environment Assembly of UN Environment and the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) as appropriate;

To support the deepening of synergies and system wide collaboration in the implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements;

To promote mainstreaming of environmental considerations in the work of UN agencies and support UN system-wide cooperation to enhance the environmental sustainability performance of UN agencies at the policy-, programmes- and operational levels.

Modus operandi

The Group will function in a results-driven, flexible and cost-effective manner, using modern telecommunication technologies wherever possible and appropriate.

UN Environment will provide the Secretariat for the Environment Management Group.

The Group will have a two-tiered structure:

- A senior-level decision making body, entitled the Senior Officials of the Environment Management Group, chaired by the Executive Director of UN Environment and consisting of senior-level officials from member organizations of the Group;
- Time-bound issue based work streams set up by the Group. They will cease to exist after completion of their tasks.

The members of the Group will meet at least once a year on the invitation of its Chairman.

The EMG functions will be based on the Rules of Procedures of the Environment Management Group as provided in Annex 1.

Annex 1

EMG Rules of Procedure

Membership

i. Participation of Members

In line with the mandate and objectives of the Group set out above, making it an instrument to enhance further inter-agency cooperation and coordination across the United Nations system on specific issues in the field of environment and human settlements, members of the Group shall be specialized agencies, programmes and organs of the United Nations system, including the secretariats of Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

ii. Participation of Non-Members

Representatives of relevant sectors of the civil society and of international non-governmental organizations with a potential and specific expertise related to the issues being deliberated by the Group may be invited by the Chairman of the Group to participate in meetings of the Group, upon the request of the Group members, and taking due account of respective United Nations rules and procedures. They may also participate in the work of an issue management group if required by the specific issue under discussion and so decided by the group. Accordingly, the lead agency of the issue management group will invite the specific additional participants.

iii. Nomination of Focal Points

The EMG Member Agency participates in the EMG through its Head of Agency or his/her designated senior staff responsible for environmental programmes. In addition, each Member nominates one focal points, who will serve as the main point of liaison for EMG matters. It is the responsibility of the EMG Member to inform the EMG Secretariat in case of change of focal point.

Environment Management Group Secretariat

i. Hosting the EMG

UN Environment will provide the Secretariat for the Environment Management Group.

ii. Responsibilities of the Secretariat

The Secretariat is responsible for:

- Preparing and organising the annual Senior Officials Meeting and the preceding Midterm Meeting of the Technical Segment;
- Preparing the documentation for the Senior Officials Meetings;
- Facilitating the work of the EMG work streams by organising their meetings, supporting the Chairs in drafting agendas and meeting documentation, and coordinating the delivery of the agreed outputs;
- Preparing reports to Governing Bodies, including UNEA, as necessary;
- Managing the EMG project and providing regular reports on funds and project implementation to UN Environment.

Selecting Issues for inclusion in the EMG Programme of Work

i. Selecting Issues

Issues can be brought for the consideration of the EMG Senior Officials:

1. Suggested by the Secretary General or the Chief Executives Board (CEB) through the EMG Chair;
2. Suggested by the EMG Chair;
3. Suggested by one or a group of EMG Members;¹
4. Suggested by the EMG Secretariat;

A concept note, using a template provided by the EMG Secretariat, providing the purpose and expected deliverables of the suggested Issue Management Group is to be submitted to the EMG Secretariat no later than two weeks prior to the midterm meeting of the EMG technical segment. The midterm meeting will agree on the relevance and expected contribution of the EMG and whether or not to propose the respective issue for approval of the Senior Officials.

ii. Selection Criteria

Issues to be included in the work programme of the EMG must meet the following criteria:

1. The environmental issue should be of relevance to the environmental agenda and contribute to integrated approaches to implementation of the three dimensions of Sustainable Development;
2. The environmental issue should be of interest to the majority of EMG Members;
3. The environmental issue should warrant system-wide collaboration and coordination;
4. The environmental issue should add value to potential work on the topic by any other interagency mechanism;
5. The proposed work on the environmental issue builds on work previously undertaken in similar areas within the UN system.

Issue Management Groups and other Modalities of Work

i. Modality Types

The EMG addresses issues of its programme of work through different modalities engaging the interested EMG Members as follows:

- a.) **Issue Management Groups:** time-bound, deals with a specific substantive issue requiring mapping, system wide strategic approach and high level commitment, consist of the majority of EMG Members with a direct interest in this topic;
- b.) **Task Teams:** consist of more limited membership; assigned to deliver short-term outputs;
- c.) **Consultative Processes:** prepare system-wide frameworks or heads of agency statements or long-term coordination, cooperation or collaboration;
- d.) **Technical Groups:** provide inter-agency support service, support enhancing the internal environmental management, programming and operations of the UN agencies, such as by conducting peer reviews;

In addition to the above mentioned modalities, the EMG organises dialogues to facilitate knowledge and information exchange among EMG members and other stakeholders in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

¹ The issue could reflect a suggestion initially put forward by a Member State through UN agencies' governing bodies such as the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA)

ToRs must be developed for the work streams and agreed by EMG Members, including a clear mandate, outputs and duration of the modality of work. The EMG ToR template should be used.

ii. Participation

EMG Members are invited to nominate respective focal points for an established work stream upon invitation by the EMG Chair. The focal point participates in the work stream meetings, coordinates and communicates within his or her own agency as necessary and provides input on behalf of his/her organisation to the group as requested. The focal point is responsible for informing the Secretariat in case of changed contact details or appointment of replacement.

While all Group Members have the right to accept or decline participation in any established work stream, any such group should benefit as much as possible from the participation of those organisations of the United Nations system which are most concerned with the issue at hand.

iii. Chairing Responsibilities

The EMG Secretariat or an EMG member agency(ies) may serve as chair of the established work streams, the work of which will be supported by the EMG Secretariat. The EMG Secretariat convenes and organizes the meetings, prepares the documents and prepares the report on the results of the Group's deliberations.

iv. Time-frame

EMG work streams are time-bound and established by the EMG Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM). Work streams will normally be given a one year mandate, however, mandates may be extended if required. The mandates of technical groups providing inter-agency support services to UN agencies can continue for longer periods depending on the need of the UN agencies for such services. Each work stream is responsible for fulfilling its mandate within the given time-frame and for reporting on progress and results to the SOM. In case a group is not able to meet the deadline, it will submit a proposal on how and when to accomplish the task to the EMG Secretariat at least six weeks before expiration of the deadline. The Group will decide on the proposal.

v. Closing down work streams

Prior to the formation of an established modality of work, the procedure for closing down that work stream should be agreed. This agreement should include a view to support the follow-up action and strengthening of long-term sustainability of EMG work. Before a modality of work under the EMG can be closed, the following must be fulfilled:

- The agreed tasks according the ToR for that modality of work have been delivered;
- An inter-agency mechanism, agency or agencies which will take up the follow-up/continued coordination has been identified. The mechanism lead will be invited to report to the EMG a year after closure, based on which the necessity for further support can be discussed.

Senior Officials Meeting (SOM)

i. Overview

A senior level decision-making body (Senior Officials) shall comprise EMG Members, which encompasses Heads of Agencies or their designated senior staff responsible for environmental

programmes. The Senior Officials will meet at least once a year on the invitation of its Chairman. They will, in particular:

- Engage in high-level strategic discussions on timely environment-related topics;
- Identify the specific issues to be addressed by the Group;
- Establish, as appropriate, an ad hoc issue management group for each specific issue identified;
- Decide on the mandate and time-frame of each Issue Management Group, Task Team, Consultative Process and Technical Group;
- Adopt the reports of the issue management groups.

ii. Chairing Responsibilities

The Executive Director of UN Environment acts as Chair of the SOM. However, another lead agency can volunteer to co-chair the SOM. Co-chairing of the SOM can be rotated among the EMG members.

i. Process, Participation and Timing

The Senior Officials Meeting is an in-person meeting, the timing and venue of which will be decided by the Senior Officials. In preparation for the SOM, a virtual meeting of the EMG focal points may be held two to three weeks in advance of the SOM to review and finalise draft decisions.

The meeting of the Senior Officials will be composed of two segments:

- a. A technical segment attended by EMG focal points to consider progress report and proposed recommendations;
- b. A senior segment attended by the EMG Senior Officials to approve the reports and adopt the EMG work plan for the coming year.

The SOM will be held over two days, with at least one day in between the technical and senior segments to allow for proper briefings of the Senior Officials.

ii. Preparation

The EMG Secretariat prepares the following standard documentation for the Senior Officials Meeting:

- a. A draft agenda in consultation with the EMG Chair and EMG Members;
- b. Draft progress reports and draft recommendations for further action for its work streams in close consultation with the respective work stream focal points;
- c. Draft work plan for the following operational year;
- d. Other background document(s) as necessary, supporting a strategic discussion by the Senior Officials.

Meeting documents are to be circulated to EMG Members as follows:

- An invitation to the SOM by the EMG Chair no later than three months in advance of the meeting.
- A draft agenda no later than one month before the meeting,
- Other meeting documents no later than two weeks in advance of the meeting.

Communication and Reporting

i. Reporting to EMG Senior Officials

The EMG Secretariat reports on progress made and results achieved within its work streams to the EMG Senior Officials.

Reports from the EMG Senior Officials Meetings will be distributed to the EMG Members by the Secretariat for comments and approval, at a minimum of ten days before the given deadline. In order to enhance efficiency the deadline for comments should not exceed four weeks. The Secretariat will distribute copies of the approved report for information to Group Members.

ii. Reporting to Governing Bodies

UN Environment reports to the United Nations Environment Assembly on the work of the Environment Management Group as a standard reporting requirement. Agencies are encouraged to communicate their received EMG reporting to other governing bodies who may wish to receive information about the EMG work.

iii. Relationship with other inter-agency bodies

Secretariats of other UN interagency bodies such as the Chief Executives Board, UNDG and ECESA Plus can participate in the EMG meetings as observers.

iv. Administrative Project Reporting

The EMG Secretariat provides regular administrative reports to the UN Environment

v. Other

The EMG Secretariat prepares ad-hoc reports, briefs or updates to other Intergovernmental Processes as appropriate and if required.