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Executive summary of the 1993 Annual Report of the Executive Director

Report of the Executive Director

1. As requested by the Governing Council in its decision 17/37, operative paragraph 4, the Executive Director submits the following executive summary of her 1993 Annual Report as an information document to the Council.

2. The 1993 Annual Report marks for the organization a year of new beginnings and profound and often difficult change: the deliberations in Rio de Janeiro during the summer of 1992 gave the world's environmental agencies an agenda with which to enter the twenty-first century. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), as the United Nations environmental agency, was challenged to renew its programming to meet the directives presented by the world's political leaders. The present report reflects the activities UNEP undertook to adopt to help achieve sustainable development.

3. Chapter one describes the Environmental Law programme and the Environment and Economics programme of UNEP, the latter of which was initiated in January 1993, following consultation with other United Nations agencies and a number of international organizations. The Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law for the Nineties (the Montevideo Programme, as adopted by Governing Council decision 17/25 of 21 May 1993) takes the recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) into consideration, and provides for objectives, strategies and activities in the general development of international environmental law for the 1990's. The Programme in particular addresses: the capacity of States to participate effectively in the development and implementation of environmental law; implementation of international legal instruments in the field of the environment; adequacy of existing international instruments; dispute avoidance and settlement; and legal and administrative mechanisms for the prevention and redress of pollution and other environmental damage. In the area of environmental aspects of development planning and cooperation the chapter also

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addresses problems relating to five major issues: economic policy instruments; valuation of environmental goods and services; environmental impact assessment and cost-benefit analysis; environmental and natural resource accounting; and Trade.

4. Chapter two concentrates on the impact of change in the biosphere and threats to various ecosystems. The programme undertaken by UNEP presents a new and integrated approach, geared towards improved and increased cooperation with its partners in developing impact and response strategies to cope with a variety of issues. The interlinkages between issues such as climate change and resultant sea-level rise, drought and other natural disasters and threats to biodiversity are covered in this chapter. Furthermore, the consistent efforts undertaken by UNEP to develop an operational network of agreements under which neighbouring countries take joint action to conserve common resources are discussed. Throughout the year, UNEP continued to refine its programme activities in the Environmentally Sound Management of Inland Waters (EMINWA).

5. Chapter three, focusing on human health and welfare, sets out how UNEP, in collaboration with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), supports activities aimed at building the knowledge base and strengthening national capacities concerning biosafety issues, including risk assessment and risk management. The chapter also discusses how UNEP is working with other partners in exploring ways of developing an internationally agreed regulatory instrument on biosafety. The chapter describes how the International Register of Potentially Toxic Chemicals (IRPTC) continues to devote itself to the exchange of information on chemicals and chemical risks and to the strengthening of national capabilities to manage chemicals. To this end, IRPTC enhanced its cooperation with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and WHO in conjunction with the International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS), as well as other organizations including FAO, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). Also, the chapter draws attention to the continued cooperation undertaken between UNEP, WHO and ILO in the IPCS.

6. Chapter four describes the work of the Global Resource Information Database (GRID), which uses computer technology to process and analyse data and produce environmental maps and print-outs which can be used by planners. It is based on environmental geographic information systems (GIS), which can be used to study local, national or global issues. From tropical soil biology to Arctic research, from database management for the Lower Mekong basin to a world survey of nuclear power plants, GRID scans the planet, acting as an environmental switchboard to provide data to users throughout the world. This chapter also deals with INFOTERRA, the UNEP environmental information exchange mechanism, which focuses on the provision of guidance on how information can be most effectively used. The chapter further discusses how this programme has strengthened its electronic mail system, both among network partners and within the UNEP secretariat, and how the INFOTERRA regional service centres have assumed a more prominent role in the delivery of INFOTERRA services.

7. Chapter five concentrates on the reorientation of environmental education towards sustainable development by increasing public awareness and promoting training. These issues are addressed by various programmes within UNEP from different perspectives. The chapter describes how the overall goal of the UNEP environmental education programme has been implemented by the provision of technical and public information to enable Governments, non-governmental organizations, the media, interest groups and communities to act responsibly in order to improve their quality of life while caring for the Earth and its

ecosystems. In doing so, UNEP identifies and works with an extended network of outreach partners who can provide a multiplier effect in creating environmental awareness, establishing new information networks and enhancing the managerial capacities in the field of public and technical information of developing countries.

8. Chapter six describes the role of the regional offices representing UNEP in all capacity-building activities and programme implementation with Governments in close collaboration with United Nations resident coordinators in their geographical domain. The regional offices organize training courses and workshops on environmental management for the benefit of the countries of the region. Their role in the preparation and development of country strategies to enable the provision of technical assistance and capacity-building projects is also described in this chapter.

9. In chapter seven the administrative and financial aspects of the year 1993 are described, including elaborations on staffing, overview of contributions and expenditures of the Environment Fund, trust funds, counterpart contributions and the United Nations regular budget.

10. Chapter eight describes the process by which the new needs, methods and direction of the organization were brought forward and presented at the Governing Council at its seventeenth session in May 1993, the first post-UNCED meeting of the UNEP governing body. The first budgetary directives given for the new year were a significant shift of emphasis toward meeting the requirements of Agenda 21. The chapter further elaborates on the priorities as agreed upon by the Governments during this session, describing the reorientation of programmes to comply with the Rio mandate and to be both responsive to the needs of Governments and people and driven by those needs. In addition, the chapter introduces the results management system.