

International Environmental Governance Reform

On 17 June 2010 the Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) gave a briefing for New York-based Permanent Missions regarding 'International Environmental Governance Reform'. The topic being addressed was UNEP's solution to the fragmentation within the Environmental policy sector.

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The current environmental policy system consists of over 500 environmental agreements and various disconnected institutions. The result is fragmentation: multiple overlaps and gaps in policy, which leads to additional costs. UNEP believes that the system needs to be seriously addressed since the most recent attempt at the UN for reform (15th session of the Conference of the Parties - COP 15) ended without a conclusion. The UN is not equipped with the authority or mandate to deal with the complexities or scope of the environmental crisis, and therefore resources are still being depleted.

UNEP was asked to provide some constructive and evaluative proposals regarding Environmental Governance reform. Their solution is a consultative group that consists of 2 to 4 representatives from "each UN region, which will be lead by two co-chairs (one from a developed country and one from a developing country)". It is open to any interested government. The functions and goals of this group are as follows: "create a credible/accessible, science-based, policy interface, develop a global authoritative voice, and achieve effectiveness in the UN." The ultimate goal is to create a new umbrella organization for sustainable development that will engage in enhanced institutional reform.

At the moment this consultative group has been established. Kenya and Finland have been nominated as the chairs, and the second meeting is planned to be hosted in Finland. The new group is to present its work to the governing council in February 2011, and the work will also be contributed to the plenary meetings for the Earth Summit in 2012 – 'Rio + 20'.