

World Environment Day roundtable: The case for Global Environmental Goals

Summary of discussions

As part of the World Environment Day celebrations, on 2 June 2006, the GEN organized a roundtable on the topic of Global Environmental Goals. Panel presentations were made by Claude Martin, former Director General of WWF International, Amb. Thomas Kolly of the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment, Hilary French of the Worldwatch Institute and Jean Fabre of UNDP, under the chairmanship of UNEP European Regional Director Frits Schlingemann, attended by the Geneva international and environmental community. Some of the points raised in the presentations and discussions are summarized below.

Despite the growing number of treaties, environmental degradation continues at an alarming pace. There is a need to create policy tools to arrest this trend. Common goals can help governments to formulate the framework for their cooperative action.

MDG 7 explicitly addresses environmental sustainability. Some felt that this goal could benefit from being more focussed, while environmental considerations could be better integrated in the implementation of the other MDGs. Another view called for examining action needed at the local level in order to meet existing goals.

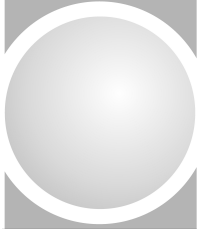
There was agreement that the Millennium Development Goals themselves are important achievements of the international community. They have raised public awareness and focussed political attention on targets.

Two years later, the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development took additional steps by articulating targets on several environment-related topics, such as biodiversity, chemicals, fisheries, marine protected areas and basic sanitation. In addition, several targets are included explicitly in multi-lateral environmental agreements, such as the climate change convention.

In order for goals to be achievable, they must be measurable, time-bound, and have milestones or indicators to measure progress. Political will, adequate funding and the right institutional partnerships are important features for success. If goals are not met, this could undermine the credibility of the institutions setting them.

Goals should be simple enough to be understood easily, but should not over-simplify complex processes. Goals can ensure the continuity in policy that will outlive any changes in governments and leaders.

Collating existing environmental goals into a coherent package could reduce fragmentation of environmental topics, promote ratification of environmental treaties, streamline the environmental system, and give greater focus, visibility and political commitment to the goals.



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**Friday, 2 June 2006, 10:00 – 12:00
International Environment House I, Meeting Room 3**

Would Global Environmental Goals loosely modeled on the Millennium Development Goals better protect the environment? Supporters of this idea argue that "GEGs" would raise the visibility of environmental issues and secure greater political commitment. The criteria and indicators used for measuring implementation would make it possible to chart progress and energize efforts when targets risk not being met.

One approach to developing GEGs would be to repackage and render explicit existing treaty commitments on climate change, biodiversity, chemicals and so on. Another would be to develop a whole new set of goals. Which might work best?

Today's roundtable will explore the Global Environmental Goals concept in greater detail and consider whether it could indeed offer added value.

Agenda

9.30 Coffee

10:00 Welcome and introduction by the moderator, Frits Schlingemann, Director and Regional Representative for Europe, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

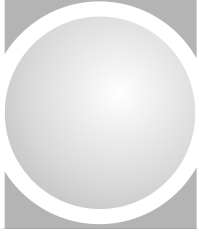
10.10 Presentations by the panel members:

- Dr. Claude Martin, former Director General of WWF International
- Amb. Thomas Kolly, Head, International Affairs Division, Federal Office for the Environment of the Swiss Confederation
- Hilary French, Senior Advisor for Programs, Worldwatch Institute, Washington, D.C.
- Jean Fabre, Director in charge of communications, UNDP Geneva

11.00 Discussion with panelists and participants

11.50 Wrap-up by the moderator

12.00 End



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Jean Fabre is Director in charge of communications at UNDP in Geneva. He previously worked as an engineer before collaborating with various NGOs on social issues. Mr. Fabre was elected Secretary General of Italy's Radical Party in 1978 and President in 1980. He then he co-founded and became the first Secretary General of the Brussels-based Campaign of Nobel Laureates against hunger and for development.

Hilary French is Senior Advisor for Programs at the Worldwatch Institute, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit research organization that focuses on international environment and development issues. She also serves as a Special Advisor to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Ms. French publishes and lectures widely on global environmental and sustainable development issues.

Ambassador Thomas Kolly was appointed head of the International Division of Switzerland's Federal Office for the Environment in November 2005. Prior to this, he worked for the Integration Office, the leading Swiss agency responsible for the relationship between Switzerland and the European Union. During his career as a diplomat, he has been posted at the Swiss permanent delegation to the OECD, the Swiss Embassy in Washington D.C. and the Swiss Embassy in The Hague.

Claude Martin was Director General of WWF International from 1993 to 2005. During his term, WWF developed into the world's largest conservation organization, boasting local WWF offices in about 100 countries with over 4,400 staff. Mr. Martin also served as Director and Chief Executive of WWF Switzerland from 1980 to 1990. Previous assignments included serving as Director of National Parks in the Western Region of Ghana.

Frits Schlingemann was appointed Regional Representative and Director of the Regional Office for Europe in Geneva in 1996. He previously served as Assistant Executive Director and Director of the Division for Policy and External Relations at UNEP Headquarters. Earlier, he held various senior positions in the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and served as Senior Policy Adviser to the Minister for Development Cooperation on sustainable development issues, including the preparation of and follow-up to UNCED.