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UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

JOINT UNEP/OCHA ENVIRONMENT UNIT

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English only

ADVISORY GROUP ON ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCIES

Third Meeting

(Geneva, 30 November 1998)

REPORT OF THE THIRD MEETING

1. The third meeting of the Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies was convened jointly by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) in Geneva on 30 November 1998, in accordance with the recommendations of the second meeting of the Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies.
2. The third meeting was attended by delegations from Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Lithuania, Madagascar, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, Senegal, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and the United States of America.
3. Representatives of IAEA, IMO, UN/ECE, WMO, UNEP/Regional Office for Europe, UNEP/Chemicals Programme, UNEP/GRID, UNEP/SBC, the European Union, the International Civil Defence Organization (ICDO), and the International Green Cross also attended.
4. Mr. Gerhard Putman-Cramer, Deputy Director of OCHA-Geneva and Chief of the Disaster Response Branch (DRB) of OCHA, opened the meeting. He referred to a Governmental Advisory Meeting in 1994, which made a recommendation on close collaboration between former DHA and UNEP in order to improve the provision of international assistance to countries affected by environmental disasters. In accordance with this recommendation, a Joint UNEP/DHA Environment Unit was established the same year. OCHA and UNEP have also established the Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies. In accordance with its Terms of Reference, the Advisory Group provides a forum for an exchange of views and experiences on the subject of international assistance for environmental emergencies. This Group also reviews the work of the Joint Unit, and provides advice on its future activities.

I. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

5. The meeting adopted its agenda as contained in document EU/AG/14. It was decided to consider agenda items 4 and 5 together.

II. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

6. The meeting unanimously elected Mr. Peter Troy (United Kingdom) as Chairman, and Mr. Alberto Maturana Palacios (Chile) as Vice-Chairman.

7. The Chairman pointed out that the Advisory Group meeting was an important combination of experts in different fields and representatives of many countries and international organizations. He said that such a mixture of expertise would allow for a productive exchange of views and experience.

III. DEVELOPMENT OF SERVICES PROVIDED BY OCHA AND ACTIVITIES OF THE DISASTER RESPONSE BRANCH

8. Mr. Putman-Cramer described major elements of an emergency response system established and maintained by the Disaster Response Branch (DRB). A leaflet on the services provided by OCHA to cope with various disasters, was made available to the meeting in several languages. Mr. Putman-Cramer paid special attention to activities implemented by DRB through the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit in connection with environmental emergencies, including forest fires. It was stressed that the Joint Unit carries out its work in accordance with procedures standardized in the Disaster Response Branch. Mr. Putman-Cramer noted that the threat of environmental emergencies is becoming even greater. The world is facing a growing number of industrial and technological accidents, that have devastating effects on both population and the environment, and disrupt economic activities. Mr. Putman-Cramer said that there are also increasing combinations of natural and man-made emergencies, and natural disasters with serious environmental impacts. He referred, in particular, to the recent large-scale forest fires in several countries, disastrous floods in China and Bangladesh, and damage caused by Hurricane Mitch in Central America. It was mentioned that attention to such matters would continue to be a major activity for OCHA Disaster Response Branch, in close cooperation with UNEP.

9. Mr. Putman-Cramer specifically referred to the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) Team, that could assist in emergency assessment and field coordination during the initial relief phase. He asked donors to consider possibilities of submitting additional candidates for UNDAC training and eventual inclusion in the UNDAC Roster. It would be useful if donor countries could make available to UNDAC general disaster management specialists, some of whom should be environmental experts. It would be also highly appreciated if donors could provide financial support to UNDAC members from developing countries, which would enable DRB to reinforce existing UNDAC Teams in Latin America and the Pacific, and help establishing an African UNDAC Team. Mr. Putman-Cramer referred to the important experience in applying the UNDAC concept to environmental emergencies, and noted a strong intention of DRB and the Joint Unit to further extend the use of the UNDAC mechanism in the context of various environmental emergencies, and natural disasters with environmental impacts.

10. Mr. Thomas Peter, Officer-in-Charge of the Field Coordination Support Unit of DRB, presented additional information on the purpose and operations of UNDAC. He stressed that the UNDAC Team is comprised of disaster management experts with the task to support the United Nations Resident Coordinator in the affected country, assess disaster damage and needs of victims, and facilitate the coordination of international relief on site. He reinforced the request for the nomination of environmental experts with disaster management expertise as UNDAC Team members, as well as identification of environmental experts, who may be associated with UNDAC missions to assess the environmental aspects of a disaster, if need be.

11. Delegations expressed their satisfaction with the development of cooperation between OCHA and UNEP in the field of response to environmental emergencies.
12. Participants noted that the involvement of environmental specialists in UNDAC roster and missions was a very important point. Several donors highlighted the participation of their countries in the UNDAC mechanism, and expressed the intention to identify suitable environmental experts. The meeting strongly supported proposals to strengthen the UNDAC mechanism in general, and its environmental component in particular.
13. It was recognized that UNEP is already playing an important role by making available experts to accompany some UNDAC missions.
14. It was suggested that the selection of UNDAC members should be promoted at the national level. This process would require team work, and should involve most relevant partners, such as national emergency agencies, environment and health authorities. It was also noted that relevant national environmental authorities should be duly informed about an UNDAC mission, if it is tasked, in particular, with environmental impact assessment.
15. A representative of Egypt supported OCHA's initiative to establish an UNDAC African Team. He said that Egypt would be ready to participate and contribute to this important activity in close cooperation with other African countries.
16. A question was posed concerning types of environmental experts needed for UNDAC roster and missions. Additional information was also requested on subsequent work undertaken after completing UNDAC missions.
17. Mr. Vladimir Sakharov, Head of the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit, answered that it would be desirable to involve in UNDAC "general" environmental experts, in particular with experience in environmental impact assessment, rather than "narrow" specialists. Such experts should be able to contribute to the work of UNDAC Teams by assessing various disaster situations from an environmental point of view, evaluating actual and potential impacts of emergencies, and suggesting priorities for possible international assistance to affected countries. As far as post-UNDAC mission work is concerned, it typically includes a quick preparation and wide dissemination of missions' reports, convening meetings with potential donor countries and organizations, issuing further situation reports, and mobilizing international assistance in accordance with priority needs of affected countries.
18. A question was asked on how OCHA channels assistance, and how balanced are UNDAC assessments. It was also mentioned that health, shelter and food issues tend to attract priority attention of international assistance, without due regard to environmental aspects.
19. Mr. Putman-Cramer explained that OCHA and its UNDAC mechanism are highlighting the types of assistance needed in various disaster situations. International aid could be provided on bilateral basis and/or through OCHA. Assistance to affected countries is channelled through UN Resident Coordinators or UNDP Resident Representatives, who work in close cooperation with relevant UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, etc. UNDAC Teams are producing impartial assessments of disaster situations, however they always work in a very close contact with competent national authorities, and take into account conclusions and recommendations of relevant Governmental agencies. Mr. Putman-Cramer strongly supported the opinion that attention to environmental aspects of various disasters should be increased.

20. The Chairman summarized the discussion on this agenda item by noting that the meeting:
- received extensive information on services provided by OCHA's DRB, and its UNDAC mechanism;
 - expresses satisfaction and endorses constructive collaboration between UNEP and OCHA in enhancing the ability of the two organizations to assist countries, particularly developing countries, affected by environmental emergencies;
 - expresses appreciation to OCHA for providing the Joint Unit with emergency facilities, office space, and administrative support;
 - expresses gratitude to OCHA for making available its emergency cash grants for immediate response needs in case of environmental emergencies;
 - calls for closer attention to be paid to environmental impacts of various natural disasters;
 - supports broader application of UNDAC to environmental emergencies, and recommends the improvement of UNDAC's coverage of environmental aspects of various disasters;
 - recognizes that a number of countries are providing assistance within UNDAC in the framework of existing financial arrangements;
 - calls upon Governments to provide inputs with regard to the inclusion within the UNDAC mechanism of national environmental experts, and making available of associated environmental specialists for UNDAC missions;
 - recommends that OCHA's DRB sends a note to countries to seek further support for the UNDAC mechanism, taking into account its utilization in relation to environmental emergencies and environmental aspects of natural disasters.

IV. RELEVANT DECISIONS OF THE UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL AND MAJOR ACTIVITIES OF THE JOINT UNEP/OCHA ENVIRONMENT UNIT

21. Mr. Sakharov informed the meeting that the 19th session of the UNEP Governing Council in February 1997 adopted a special decision on environmental emergencies. In particular, the Governing Council invited Governments and UN organizations to continue to cooperate with the Joint Unit in its efforts to provide assistance to countries, and urged Governments and international organizations to contribute to the Trust Fund for Environmental Emergencies, established by UNEP. Mr. Sakharov also referred to a decision of the 5th special session of the UNEP Governing Council, held in May 1998, which welcomed the proposals of the Executive Director on areas of concentration of UNEP's activities. One of these priority areas is "Environmental information, assessment and research, including environmental emergency response capacity and strengthening of the early warning and assessment functions of UNEP". It was noted that the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit is taking fully into account these decisions.

22. Then Mr. Sakharov introduced a note on the major activities of the Joint Unit (EU/AG/16). He mentioned that a total integration of the Joint Unit into the Disaster Response Branch has been achieved. Mr. Sakharov referred, in particular, to progress in the extension of a global network of National Focal Points (NFPs) for environmental emergencies. At the same time, it was noted that some emergency operations have demonstrated that certain national focal points are not appropriate - either they cannot be reached sufficiently quickly, or they do not have authority to take decisions, or they are simply outdated and irrelevant. Delegations were asked to review the list of national focal points with regard to their respective countries, and adjust nominations as necessary.

23. Mr. Sakharov briefed the meeting on practical assistance provided by the Joint Unit to affected countries. Gratitude was expressed to many donor Governments and the OECD Secretariat, who provided or facilitated various types of assistance to affected countries. He also appreciated the important cooperation and assistance of UNEP Headquarters, Industry and Environment Office/APELL, UNEP Regional Offices, GRID, Chemicals Programme, and the Secretariat of the Basel Convention. Mr. Sakharov specifically informed the participants on recent operations and UNDAC missions to Indonesia, Brazil and the Russian Federation in connection with large-scale forest fires in these countries. He pointed out that these examples clearly demonstrate that the UNDAC concept can be successfully applied to environmental emergencies. There is a strong intention to continue using UNDAC for this type of disaster, and to further develop and improve this process. Mr. Sakharov appealed to donors to make available for UNDAC training and to place on the UNDAC roster, national candidates with specific environmental expertise. It would be also helpful if donors could be ready to make available associated national environmental experts for UNDAC missions.

24. Mr. Sakharov also referred to natural disasters with important environmental impacts. He said that closer attention should be paid to environmental consequences of such emergencies. These issues should be addressed on a systematic basis, and the UNDAC mechanism could be used to assess both humanitarian and environmental impacts, and identify relevant needs for international assistance to affected countries. This could be performed by national UNDAC members with environmental expertise, associated members from donor countries and/or UNEP, and the staff of the Joint Unit depending on the situation. In this connection, it was noted that there are some implications for donor countries, as their support is clearly needed.

25. Participants expressed satisfaction with the work of the Joint Unit, and stressed that the Unit should be reinforced. They complemented OCHA, UNEP and the Joint Unit for the work accomplished so far, and welcomed full integration of the Unit into OCHA's DRB. It was recognized that the Joint Unit had developed close cooperation with relevant UN agencies and other international organizations. It was underlined that future development of the Unit's activities would greatly depend on active participation of donor countries in its work.

26. Delegations appreciated that the Joint Unit submitted complete and reasonable information on its work and financial requirements. They recognized that the report on the Unit's work reflects that its mandate is being fulfilled, and expected results are achieved. General support was expressed for continuing the implementation of the joint UNEP/OCHA project on environmental emergencies.

27. It was noted that the Unit was successful in streamlining its activities and focusing on disaster assessment, brokerage and clearing-house. Satisfaction was expressed with the fact that UNDAC is also streamlining its activities by paying more attention to environmental aspects of various disasters. The importance of the bilateral dimension in the brokerage of expertise was underlined. In this connection, it was stressed that closer collaboration between UNDAC and the Joint Unit should not endanger the success of the past. It was pointed out that different types of assessment missions should not be mixed up.

28. A representative of the European Union congratulated the Joint Unit on the work accomplished so far. He noted that relevant services of the European Union and the Joint Unit are staying in close touch and coordinating their activities. It was pointed out that the need for rapid response to environmental emergencies is increasing, and the tools of the Joint Unit should be better known in developing countries.

29. It was pointed out that countries may use at the national level the good example provided by the Joint Unit, which is addressing both humanitarian and environmental issues, bringing together experts in different fields, and mobilizing various types of assistance.

30. A representative of Canada suggested that information be prepared in the future on the added value the Joint Unit is bringing to OCHA Disaster Response Branch in addressing different disasters.

31. Several delegations noted the importance of both multilateral and bilateral assistance to countries affected by various disasters.

32. A delegate of Chile made a reference to the case of a severe pollution of the Loa River in Chile, when the Joint Unit promptly mobilized assistance in accordance with a request of the national authorities.
33. A representative of Indonesia thanked OCHA's DRB and the Joint Unit for the provision of extensive assistance in connection with forest fire disasters, which severely affected his country in 1997 and 1998. The meeting was informed that the Indonesian Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare had entrusted the responsibility of emergency response to one of his deputies. The role of local communities in disaster management was highlighted.
34. A delegate of Brazil expressed gratitude to the Joint Unit for dispatching an UNDAC Team in connection with massive forest fires in the Brazilian State of Roraima. He mentioned that on the basis of the UNDAC mission report the national authorities have started an important process to better prevent and combat forest fires, as well as anticipate and monitor areas at risk. These mechanisms could be also applied to other environmental emergencies.
35. New trends and emerging issues with regard to environmental emergencies were noted. In this relation, a reference was made to recent large-scale forest fires in the world, and the devastating consequences of Hurricane Mitch in several countries of Central America. It was mentioned that both an efficient emergency response and better capacity building are clearly needed.
36. The Chairman summarized the discussion on this agenda item by noting that the meeting:
- welcomes a close integration of the Joint Unit into OCHA Disaster Response Branch;
 - recognizes the valuable experience gained by the Joint Unit in responding to various environmental emergencies, including massive forest fires;
 - welcomes increased collaboration of the Joint Unit with other relevant UNEP offices, especially GRID, Industry and Environment Office/APELL, Chemicals Programme, Basel Convention, and Regional Offices;
 - expresses appreciation to many Governments, which have provided extensive assistance to countries affected by various environmental emergencies;
 - expresses gratitude to other UNEP units for the provision of support to the Joint Unit in its response to environmental emergencies;
 - requests the Joint Unit to report at the next meeting of the Advisory Group on the added value the Unit is bringing to OCHA's Disaster Response Branch with regard to various disasters;
 - requests the Joint Unit to further develop its activities in accordance with the established practice and mechanisms of OCHA's DRB;
 - requests the Joint Unit to address environmental impacts of natural disasters on a systematic basis;
 - recommends the further extension and improvement of a global network of National Focal Points, that would enable the Joint Unit to contact competent national authorities quickly in case of emergency;
 - recommends that countries review the nominations of their respective organizations to the list of National Focal Points, taking into account relevant comments made during the 3rd meeting of the Advisory Group.

V. UNEP/GRID DATABASE SUPPORT FOR EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

37. Mr. Ron Witt, Regional Coordinator of UNEP Global Resource Information Database (GRID) in Geneva, presented information on this agenda item. The GRID network of 16 centres around the world holds significant geo-referenced and other data assets, and the GIS technology and know-how, which can be used in emergency preparedness and response studies and practical exercises.

38. A discussion served to highlight when, where and how GRID activities are carried out.

39. Mr. Sakharov thanked GRID-Geneva for supplying the Joint Unit on a weekly basis with useful information on important forest fires in the world and other disasters.

40. The Vice-Chairman summarized the discussion on this agenda item by noting that the meeting:

- takes note of information on GRID's capabilities relevant to emergency preparedness and response;
- recognizes the value of information produced by GRID as an assistance tool for DRB in general and the Joint Unit in particular;
- welcomes further development of close cooperation between UNEP's GRID and the Joint Unit on emergency-related issues.

VI. PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR DEVELOPING A NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE MECHANISM

41. Mr. Peter Belling, consultant to the secretariat, introduced this agenda item by referring to discussion paper EU/AG/13. He noted that the discussion paper was in draft format only, presented as a proposal for a publication that is to address topics and issues associated with establishing an emergency response mechanism which focuses on environmental emergencies. Mr. Belling then highlighted the intended content of the completed document, and emphasized the linkage between preparedness and response. He mentioned that topics associated with preparedness, especially components of an environmental contingency plan, are addressed in greater detail in an earlier publication, namely the □Guidelines for the Development of an Environmental Emergency Plan□.

42. Mr. Belling noted that the discussion paper presents a number of aspects of a response mechanism, and depicts these aspects with four types of response mechanisms that could be established at the national or at the regional level. He noted that these response mechanisms are all intended to focus on environmental emergencies, and that the primary differences between them are essentially costs. The four types of response mechanisms discussed in the draft document are, a) a fully staffed centre, operational 24-hours per day, b) an office on regular work hours with some off-hour support, c) a desk as focal point for environmental emergencies co-located within an emergency centre that addresses a wide range of emergencies, and d) an integrated response mechanism where response procedures for environmental emergencies are fully interwoven into operating procedures of an emergency centre that has responsibility for a wide range of emergencies.

43. Delegates commended both the consultant and the Joint Unit for their work on this subject as well as the related document, □Guidelines for the Development of a National Environmental Contingency Plan□. It was suggested that there is merit in completing the draft document and making this material available to countries. Delegations expressed the opinion that such a document could provide countries with valuable information in establishing their own response system or enhancing already-existing systems. It was also noted that consideration be given to translating the material into other languages. Delegates further noted that there may be merit in combining the publication □Guidelines for a Contingency Plan□ with the completed discussion paper document tabled for this meeting.

44. In recognition of the often-limited resources of developing countries, delegates suggested that the completion of the document focus on de-emphasizing the creation of an independent environmental response centre. To this end, it was proposed that a completed document not give the appearance of ranking options presented, but at the same time clearly emphasize the value of an integrated approach. This could be achieved by elaborating more fully the section of the draft document which the document currently refers to as the least-cost option. Delegates also added that it is important for the agency of a country responsible for environmental matters to have its own response system in place if an integrated approach to response is to be effective. Delegates further suggested that the "Guidelines for a Contingency Plan" as well as the completed document under discussion be made available "on-line".

45. The Vice-Chairman summarized the discussion on this topic by noting that the meeting:

- takes note, with appreciation, of a valuable discussion paper prepared by Mr. Belling which, once completed, should provide useful suggestions for establishing a response mechanism that addresses environmental emergencies, or for enhancing already-existing emergency systems;
- recommends that the document be completed, as proposed, taking into account the suggestions made by delegates;
- recommends that the document be disseminated to countries once it is completed, and that this document as well as the "Guidelines for the Development of a National Environmental Contingency Plan" be made available "on-line".

VII. UPDATING OF THE DIRECTORY OF EMERGENCY RESPONSE CENTRES

46. Mr. Sakharov, introduced this subject by referring to document EU/AG/15. He informed the meeting that the Directory is in draft form as entries are still expected from several countries. In addition, the OECD Secretariat is in the process of preparing introductory material for the Directory, as well as supplementary materials (e.g. indices and matrices to facilitate its use). The next draft is expected to be completed in January, and it will be circulated to all those who have made contributions, before it is finally published. It is also planned to make an internet-based version.

47. Mr. Sakharov answered questions posed by some representatives, and asked delegations to review the draft Directory and provide inputs, as appropriate.

48. The Vice-Chairman summarized discussion on this topic by noting that the meeting:

- takes note of information on this subject;
- encourages countries who wish to make a contribution to the Directory to do so.

VIII. PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE JOINT UNEP/OCHA ENVIRONMENT UNIT

49. Mr. Sakharov introduced this subject by referring to document EU/AG/17, which contains a concise workplan and budgetary requirements for future activities of the Joint Unit (Annexes I, II and III to the present report). He said that the Joint Unit would consolidate this project, to strengthen the international capacity to respond to environmental emergencies. It would continue focusing on practical assistance to countries facing disasters with environmental consequences, taking into account recommendations of the Advisory Group. Mr. Sakharov noted that in accordance with a decision of the 5th Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council, the Joint Unit would further develop its close collaboration with relevant UNEP Divisions, in order to make full use of the monitoring, assessment and early warning capabilities of UNEP. A major output of this project would be an improved, better structured and coordinated delivery of environmental emergency services to the international community. Mr. Sakharov stressed that actual implementation of the Joint Unit's work programme would depend on available financial resources and staffing of the Unit.

50. Mr. Sakharov also briefed the meeting on the state of the Joint Unit, which consists at present of only one professional (P-5) and one secretary (G-4). There is an indication that UNEP would be able to allocate additional resources for another professional position (P-3). A reference was also made to the Trust Fund for Environmental Emergencies, that has been formally established by UNEP. Mr. Sakharov noted that this Trust Fund would be used only for relevant activities, basically serving as a reserve fund for emergency missions to affected countries. He appealed to potential donor countries and organizations to contribute to the Trust Fund. Mr. Sakharov added that official letters would be sent to potential donors in early 1999, asking them to consider possible contributions to the Trust Fund for Environmental Emergencies.

51. Delegations believed that it would be necessary to articulate a useful performance of the Joint Unit, and pointed out that the UNEP Governing Council should be requested to make additional resources available to the Joint Unit, and improve its staffing and technical basis. It was noted that in order to obtain the necessary support from the 20th session of the UNEP Governing Council, it would be advisable if the Head of the Joint Unit comes to Nairobi and meets with delegations concerned before the session, to discuss relevant questions.

52. Delegations recognized the importance of contributing to the Trust Fund on Environmental Emergencies, and pointed out that any duplication should be avoided between expenditures related to UNDAC missions and this Trust Fund.

53. Mr. Sakharov assured the meeting that there will be no financial overlap between UNDAC and other arrangements. He noted that the Joint Unit participates in UNDAC missions for large-scale disasters with a mixture of humanitarian and environmental impacts. In case of more specific environmental emergencies, the Unit is sending on request expert assessment missions, which are different from UNDAC and do not use UNDAC-related financial resources.

54. A discussion on periodicity and length of meetings of the Advisory Group showed that delegations were in favour of holding meetings every second year, with the duration of 2 days.

55. It was proposed to set up a small core Group, that would help the Joint Unit to prepare basic documentation for sessions of the Advisory Group, and meet in between the regular sessions of the Advisory Group, if necessary. Such a core Group could consist of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Advisory Group, and some interested countries. A core Group could be consulted by electronic means, by exchanging documents by e-mail or putting them on the Internet.

56. A suggestion was made to review at the next meeting of the Advisory Group one or several specific emergency cases, to exchange experience and lessons learned.

57. The Chairman summarized discussion on this topic by noting that the meeting:

- recognizes the necessity of appropriate staffing of the Joint Unit;
- recommends to urge the UNEP Governing Council to allocate sufficient resources to the Joint Unit for the biennium 2000-2001;
- asks potential donor countries to consider possibilities of contributing to the Trust Fund for Environmental Emergencies;
- takes note that the Joint Unit would send a letter to potential donors with a request to contribute to the Trust Fund;
- take note that the Trust Fund would basically serve as a reserve fund for emergency operations;
- recommends that the next meeting of the Advisory Group considers selected emergency case studies in order to exchange experience and lessons learned in both affected and assisting countries;
- recommends the establishment of a small core Group for consultations in-between regular meetings of the Advisory Group;
- decides to hold the 4th meeting of the Advisory Group for 2 days in 2000, preferably in conjunction with other relevant meetings.

IX. OTHER BUSINESS

58. The attention of the meeting was drawn to the anticipated "millennium bug". This problem, also known as the Y2K-bug, for computers as well as date-dependent chips imbedded in any of a number of installations and control systems, may adversely affect transportation systems and industrial facilities. This in turn may give rise to an increase in industrial accidents. Delegates were advised to review their respective state of preparedness particularly with the advent of the year 2000.

59. The Chairman concluded the meeting by noting that the background documentation was useful, and the meeting itself was beneficial. He thanked the Joint Unit and OCHA's DRB for their extensive work to prepare and carry out the 3rd meeting of the Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies.

**JOINT UNEP/OCHA ENVIRONMENT UNIT
DISASTER RESPONSE BRANCH
CONCISE WORKPLAN AND TIMETABLE FOR 1999**

Period	Activities
January to December	Delivery of environmental emergency services to the international community
January to December	Participation in emergency response activities of the Disaster Response Branch of OCHA
January to December	Participation in the DRB Duty System
January to December	Maintaining access to selected databanks
February to April	Review and adjustment of activities taking into account recommendation of the Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies and relevant decisions of the 20th session of the UNEP Governing Council
March to June	Completion of "Practical Considerations for Developing National Environmental Emergency Response Mechanisms"
April to August	Identification of sources of expertise for initial assessment and post-emergency analysis
January to August	Preparations for simulation exercise "Comprotex 99"
September to October	Participation in simulation exercise "Comprotex 99"
August to September	Dissemination of "Practical Considerations for Developing National Environmental Emergency Response Mechanisms"
February to November	Extension of a network of National Focal Points on environmental emergencies
May to August	Preparation of documentation for the 4th meeting of the Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies
May to October	Elaboration of interface procedures with UNEP units, UN bodies and other relevant international organizations
June to September	Improving procedures of notification on environmental emergencies and request of international assistance
July to November	Incorporation of environmental aspects of emergencies into the DRB response manual
August to October	Adjustment of OCHA systems and mechanisms, and development of additional tools, as required
Periodic	Reporting to UNEP and OCHA on the implementation of the project

**JOINT UNEP/OCHA ENVIRONMENT UNIT
DISASTER RESPONSE BRANCH
BASIC ELEMENTS OF A WORKPLAN AND TIMETABLE FOR 2000 - 2001**

Period	Activities
January 2000 to December 2001	Delivery of environmental emergency services to the international community, through the implementation of basic functions: - information clearinghouse - brokerage - mobilization of multilateral assistance - independent assessment of accidents
January 2000 to December 2001	Further extension of a network of National Focal Points on environmental emergencies, periodic review of NFP list, maintenance of links with focal points
January 2000 to December 2001	Further identification of sources of expertise for initial assessment and post-emergency analysis, and the maintenance of a roster of environmental stand-by experts
January 2000 to December 2001	Participation in emergency response activities of the Disaster Response Branch of OCHA
January 2000 to December 2001	Participation in DRB Duty System
January 2000 to December 2001	Maintaining access to selected databanks
February 2000 to November 2001	Further elaboration and improvement of interface procedures with relevant UNEP units, UN bodies and other international organizations
March 2000 to March 2001	Improvement of notification procedures with regard to environmental emergencies and requests for international assistance
May to July 2000	Preparation of documentation for the 5th meeting of the Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies
July 2000 to October 2001	Further adjustments of DRB systems and mechanisms, and development of additional tools, as required
August 2000 to November 2001	Further integration of specific national focal points into the DRB emergency response framework
November 2000	4th meeting of the Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies
November 2000 to May 2001	Further incorporation of environmental aspects of emergencies into the DRB response manual
December 2000 to January 2001	Preparation of documentation for the 21st session of the UNEP Governing Council
Periodic	Reporting to UNEP and OCHA on the implementation of the joint project
May to July 2001	Preparation of documentation for the 6th meeting of the Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies

**ANNUAL BUDGETARY REQUIREMENTS
OF THE JOINT UNEP/OCHA ENVIRONMENT UNIT
DISASTER RESPONSE BRANCH**

	US\$
Consultants	
Emergency Response	60,000
General	20,000
Total	80,000
Travel on official business	
Official travel	20,000
Meetings/Conferences	
Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies	70,000
Expendable equipment	
Office supplies	2,000
Library acquisitions/subscriptions	1,000
Total	3,000
Operation & maintenance	
Rental of equipment	4,500
Operation/maintenance	1,500
Total	6,000
Reporting costs	
Translation of documents	5,000
Printing costs	3,000
Total	8,000
Sundry	
Communications	10,000
Mailing	1,000
Total	11,000
Personnel	
Head of Unit (P5)	152,000
Programme Officer (P3)	112,100
Secretary (G4)	80,900
UNOG Administrative Support	27,000
Total	372,000
Grand Total	569,550