

Minutes of the discussion following presentations of Session VI. GEF-Related Activities in International Waters (Thematic Session on pollution and other environment management related issues)

The presentations were kept deliberately short, with ten minutes each, in order to allow for sufficient time for discussion. The discussion was organized in two parts. The first half focused on technical issues related directly to the presentations and covering both clarifications and exchanging technical experiences. In the second part of the discussion the focus was shifted towards more general implementation related project experiences.

The presentation on ballast water management options found support in the audience, which highlighted the importance of the issues covered and cited examples of the North American Great Lakes region. The invasion of new species as a direct result of ships emptying ballast water in the Lakes is a real concern. In particular, it was discussed how to treat ships with empty ballast tanks, because the ships usually arrive loaded and only start filling up ballast tanks and subsequently discharging them as they go along the various destination ports on the Lakes. The problem to be addressed is the residual material in the tanks as the major source of contamination. The IMO has a lot of experience in treating the ballast water issue and is working on the execution of the GEF funded project.

The artisanal gold mining project triggered a lot of discussion. A concern was voiced on how to include or reach the largely illegal small-scale gold miners in many African countries. The experiences in Ghana are encouraging, with the setting up by the Government of small-scale centres to help organize these small-scale miners and that also buy the gold produced. The answer to the question whether there were any, more environmentally friendly, alternatives for using mercury in the gold mining process, is unfortunately negative, the only alternative being cyanide, which is however, just as threatening to the environment. Bio-leaching can only help eliminate the need for the use of sulfur, but doesn't eliminate the need for mercury or cyanide. On the question why UNIDO is not also looking at bigger scale gold mining, the clarification was given that it is not within UNIDO's mandate to cover that part of the industry and that it is lacking the necessary capacity and expertise. It does however collaborate on some issues, like the recent cyanide spill in Romania, with experts in UNEP (Paris office). It was further pointed out that a lot of the workers involved in the small-scale mining business are actually women and children. This adds a new dimension to the work UNIDO is doing in this field. The presentation noted that the mercury emissions from natural sources (e.g. volcanic activity) exceeds emissions from man's activities and that there is unfortunately not much we can do, other than try to minimize manmade emissions.

The discussion shifted its focus subsequently to the issue of POPs. It was asked if the POPs initiative would follow a similar phased approach as seen with the earlier IW operational programs. It was noted however, that the need for extensive analysis, like seen in TDA and SAP, is much less and it is possible to move more quickly into actual implementation with concrete action on the ground. This can be clearly seen in the currently started project or the ones that are under preparation.

The technical part of the discussion finally turned to the Land and water initiative with the request from the FFEM if the GEF would be able under this new initiative to finance local natural resource management components of projects like the one they are preparing in Burkina Faso. The panel pointed out that this was indeed the case and that it welcomed this sort of opportunity for new partnerships. The importance of capacity development in the initiative was highlighted, especially since the existing extension capacity is often very limited. In this context the example of Ghana was presented of how extension officers from the Ministry of Agriculture could be used in helping create awareness about the National Environmental Action Plan.

It is with these remarks that the discussion shifted towards the second part on more general project implementation related issues. The central issue of sustainability came up and it was observed that ensuring and creating local ownership was key in achieving this. It was noted that the tendency of many projects to create new structures, with associated personnel requirements, is often a root cause for failing to achieve sustainability. Projects should preferably be rooted in existing structures and build on them. A frequent problem that project managers are confronted with is the difficulty of translating the project document into

concrete action on the ground. Often these prodocs are not very realistic and the result of very long planning process. A certain flexibility in their implementation should be allowed for. This was generally acknowledged by the group and the experiences of the Danube project were cited as an example of how this can be achieved. Another issue that was discussed was the definition of capacity development and how it can best be assessed. In particular, most projects provide for monitoring achievements in this field only during the project implementation period, while the real proof for lasting capacity developed during the project can only be measured after project completion. It is important as a measure for sustainability. The panel informed the group that this need for and the importance of post project evaluation is recognized now within the GEF and a discussion on how to address this is currently ongoing.