

2nd HEMA WORKING GROUP MEETING
Buenos Aires, Argentina, October 27-28, 2004

Record of Discussion

The HEMA Working Group met for the 2nd time in Buenos Aires on October 27-28, 2004 to discuss upcoming HEMA Ministerial meeting scheduled for June 2005 in Mar del Plata, Argentina. Background papers, deliverables to the Ministerial meeting and other activities needed between now and the Ministerial meeting were discussed. The meeting was chaired jointly by Canada and Argentina.

DAY 1: October 27

Agenda Item 1: Opening Remarks

The meeting began with opening remarks by Ray Edwards, the Canadian co-chair, followed by Dr. Carlos Vizzotti, Deputy Secretary of Health Relations and Research, and Dr. Atilo Savino, Secretary of the Environment and Sustainable Development of the Ministry of Health and Environment of Argentina and the three participating observers: Ricardo Sanchez (UNEP/ROLAC), Luiz Galvao (PAHO) and Fernando Dora (OAS). The opening remarks covered the purpose and expected outcomes of the meeting.

Agenda Item 2: Adoption of Meeting Agenda

Members adopted the agenda without any changes

Agenda Item 3: Promoting HEMA - Progress to Date

Working Group members and regional organizations discussed opportunities where HEMA was addressed at various regional meetings.

- Ray Edwards mentioned that HEMA information was shared at the event "Furthering global approaches for Environment and Health Policy-making" organized by Canada on the sideline of the 4th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in Budapest, Hungary in June 2004.
- Southern Cone (Brazil) mentioned that efforts were made to coordinate with countries via MERCOSUR. HEMA-related issues will be discussed at the Ministers of Health of MERCOSUR plus Chile meeting on November 8 to 11. She also debriefed on the Recife meeting on Indicators where HEMA was discussed and mentioned that Brazil will submit more concrete work for Mar del Plata.
- Caribbean representative updated the Group on the HEMA information session held in Trinidad in June 2004 on the sideline of Second Caribbean Environmental Forum but noted that not much progress has been achieved since that meeting.

- Andean representative said that they encountered difficulties similar to those in the Southern Cone with respect to participation by countries but support from Venezuela and Colombia was great. HEMA will be discussed at the upcoming November 2004 meeting of the environmental authorities of the Andean region. In Venezuela, ministries of health and the environment are working together more closely. HEMA will also be discussed at the binational meeting in Colombia on November 4, 2004. Efforts are being made in exploring funding for HEMA initiatives.
- North American (USA) representative mentioned that US EPA is working with PAHO to define common strategies for disseminating the initiative. The HEMA initiative would be brought up at different meetings, including the UN-CSD in April 2005, at PAHO international workshops and at US-Mexico Border initiative events.
- The OAS representative reported that OAS had provided active support for organizing inter-American meetings on environment and health, particularly related to the integrated management of water resources and human health and HEMA will be discussed at the upcoming preparatory meeting for the Fourth World Forum on Water in Mexico. HEMA, in the context of integrated water resource management, will be discussed in Jamaica in August 2005. Ongoing work is being done with UNEP on several projects financed by GEF International Waters in the region, involving the linkage between the environment and health.

It was suggested that the subregions work together to establish an inventory of activities for the purpose of coordinating dissemination.

Agenda Item 4: Implementation of HEMA Priority Projects

The purpose was to review proposals being developed by OAS and UNEP-ROLAC and discuss how these project proposals could take the form of potential deliverables to the HEMA meeting. The OAS representative tabled the following two proposals:

1. Environmental Health and Integrated Water Resource Management: Analysis of Institutional, Good Governance and Public Participation Linkages
2. Project Proposal on Integrated Water Management Program for Environment and Human Health in the Putumayo River Basin and Its Area of Influence

The 1st proposal aims to identify options for strengthening practical links between water management, good governance, institutional transparency and environmental health. The 2nd proposal aims to improve human health of local inhabitants of the Putumayo river basin through better management of natural resources, particularly water. It also outlines a strategic action plan (including preparatory workshops and demonstration projects in Ecuador, Columbia, Peru and Brazil) for integrated management of Putamayo river basin and its areas of influence. OAS is consulting with World Bank and IADB on this project.

- The North American (USA) representative asked OAS to clarify the nature of the project as 18 months is a very short time for obtaining results. The OAS responded that project preparation would take 18 months, and that the plan would last for four to five years.
- UNEP suggested to relate it with MDG.

PAHO-UNEP/ROLAC did not table any formal proposals but briefed the Group on ongoing sanitation and solid waste activities in the LAC region and gave an update on an integrated environment and health assessment (GEO-Health) project including development of indicators. This project received \$100K from Canada, and is currently being developed in Brazil. So far, 40% of the work related to this project has been completed. The following questions were addressed from the floor:

- Argentina: Will the report be ready for the HEMA Ministerial meeting in Mar del Plata? What about children's health indicators?
- United States: Will it be hemispheric indicators? Many agencies are working in the area of indicators, so how do you harmonize the work?
- Andean: Will it be possible to receive the Mexico report on indicators for use in Andean. It will be useful for domestic discussion.

In response, UNEP-ROLAC (Ricardo Sanchez) said that indicators need to be objective, measurable and modifiable overtime. PAHO (Luiz Galvao) expressed support for the progress on the health and environment assessment project and informed the Group about the availability of the PAHO solid waste assessment in the Americas report in CD rom.

Agenda Item 5A: Preparing for Ministerial Meeting Historical Context

Introducing this session, Ray Edwards mentioned that Canada developed the Historical Context document because of concerns raised about the origin of HEMA and the naming of HEMA I and HEMA II. Canada sees the 1995 Pan American Conference on Health and Environment as a precursor to the HEMA process and the 2001 Summit of the Americas Action Plan represents the official launch of the HEMA process. Two key comments were addressed from the floor:

- Recognizing when the meeting took place was a good idea
- If there is objection to numbering, let's mention "location" instead of calling HEMA I or HEMA II.

There was a consensus not to name HEMA I or HEMA II but to mention the location where the HEMA meeting was and/or being held.

Agenda Item 5B&C: Preparing for Ministerial Meeting Critical Path Theme, Objectives and Desired Outcome of the Ministerial Meeting

The purpose of this agenda item was to review the proposed path to HEMA II including discussion on theme, objectives and outcomes of the upcoming HEMA Ministerial meeting. The session was led by Argentina with a document "Meeting of the Ministers of Health and Environment of the Americas, Argentina 2005" highlighting general and specific objectives of

the Ministerial meeting. The document reflected strong emphasis on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). An extensive floor discussion took place:

- Brazil representative mentioned that since the document was circulated on site, there was no time to review it but priority action and recommendations within the MDG framework are very clear.
- PAHO representative argued for consideration of all MDGs and alignment with the Pan-American Charter. He noted that focus on MDGs will facilitate discussion with funders.
- USA representative pointed out that, while links to MDGs are good, emphasis on MDGs should not override HEMA goals. She raised a question: "Is it MDG or HEMA goals that we are going to meet?"
- Venezuela and Caribbean representatives asked the Group to look back to HEMA Task Force/ Working Group Terms of Reference (ToR) and maintained that it is not right to leave the mandate given by our ministers at the Ottawa HEMA meeting.
- OAS pointed out the need to maintain an identity for HEMA and that only those MDGs that compliment HEMA goals should be considered.
- Canada reiterated that, while MDG is a valuable frame of reference, the MDGs are broader than the HEMA goals and hence the effort should be tailored to reporting on HEMA goals with relevance to MDGs, taking into account the Summit of the Americas.
- Argentina agreed on the need to rewrite the critical path and link HEMA to MDGs

Summing up this session, Canadian co-chair (Ray Edwards) pointed out to the following two competing views:

- 1) emphasize MDGs. This will help acquire funding.
- 2) recognize MDGs complementarities to HEMA. Should be reporting on HEMA goals with relevance to MDGs with working strategies developed accordingly.

He reiterated the need to maintain coherence with the past and reflected that the Working Group had arrived at a consensus on priority themes after an in-depth discussion at the Working Group meeting in Jamaica, as well as the discussion at the HEMA information session for donors. He then concluded the session saying that "wording" need to be revised and hence will be discussed at the next day's session.

DAY 2: October 28

Agenda Item 5E: Preparing for Ministerial Meeting Role of Civil Society in the HEMA Process

The session began with OAS presenting the document "Involvement of Civil Society in the HEMA Process/HEMA II Meeting" which highlighted the need of civil society engagement for promoting transparency in the HEMA process. Three possible options of civil society engagement were proposed and emphasis placed on virtual form of civil society participation. The following issues were addressed during floor discussion:

- Argentina pointed out that legitimacy and accountability are key factors for promoting civil society engagement. To the Argentine question on "How to promote civil society participation under financial constraint?", Brazil suggested that sub-regional fora (e.g. MERCASUR in Southern Cone and Environment Forum in LAC) could be used.
- Andean representatives mentioned that national policies encourage civil society participation but organizing civil society engagement is a challenge. What criteria to use as representation of civil society - trade union/ professional? How do we listen to the voices of the civil society movement at grass root level?
- PAHO, UNEP and USA representatives suggested borrowing ideas from the Summit of the Americas and the Ottawa HEMA meeting as well as the WSSD in Johannesburg in developing a civil society engagement model. PAHO reiterated that without civil society support, MDGs cannot be addressed effectively.
- Caribbean representative mentioned that experiences can be drawn from initiatives such as the "White Water to Blue Water Initiative". He emphasized managing financial support so that the idea of civil society engagement will materialize.
- Referring to the civil society engagement process adopted during the Ottawa HEMA meeting, the Canadian co-chair mentioned that civil societies had the opportunity to directly communicate with Ministers to put forward their concerns. He also suggested referring to the 1st Task Force meeting ToR and to keep in mind the time frame while aiming for consultation with civil society on background documents.
- North America (Canada) suggested following possibilities:
 - Civil society input to Ministerial meeting through virtual consultation.
 - Sub-regions to arrange its own consultation.
 - Civil society event at the meeting itself
 - Civil society presentation to Ministers

Summing up the session, Andrea Brusco reiterated that funding is a key issue and to look for funding, we need to have a strategy at various levels to cover different interests of NGOs/civil society groups. It was agreed that Argentina will work with Canada and the OAS to develop strategies for civil society engagement and working group members will provide input on the civil society engagement document by mid-December after consulting with relevant civil society organizations in their respective countries and/or sub-regions. The need to identify a local organization to lead the process in each country, and establishing synergy with the Summit of the Americas civil society involvement process, were also pointed out.

Agenda Item 5G: Preparing for HEMA Ministerial Meeting The Deliverables

One of the deliverables to the meeting was the report "From Ottawa to Mar del Plata – Progress Made on HEMA Follow-Up Actions" prepared by Canada. The report has addressed the progress made in the follow-up to the HEMA Ministerial commitment of 2002 and provided an overview of progress in establishing a HEMA follow-up structure, the status of implementation of HEMA goals, the identification of priority themes and funding issues. It highlights successes achieved: a HEMA follow-up process is in place; health and environment sectors are working together; countries have endorsed HEMA goals with action; opportunities for action are defined and priority theme proposals developed for Ministerial direction. The report suggests that as

knowledge, capacity, leadership, political will and financial commitment influence the degree of success, the HEMA Ministerial meeting should be used to inject new energy into the HEMA process and goals. Canadian co-chair asked for input from the floor:

- Caribbean representative appreciated the report and promised to provide written comment.
- North American (USA) representative complimented the report as excellent communication document.
- PAHO representative said the endnotes of the report are very useful and those are the ones we want to communicate to Ministers.
- UNEP representative suggested that integrated health and environment analysis and MDGs be included in the report and agreed to send written comments.
- Andean representative (Venezuela) also promised to send written comments.

In sum, the report was well-received and the working group members promised to send their comments.

Agenda Item 6 – HEMA Secretariat

The purpose of this agenda item was to reach a consensus on the establishment of a HEMA Secretariat. Canadian co-chair led this session explaining that, subsequent to a discussion at the HEMA Working Group meeting in Jamaica in March 2004, OAS submitted a proposal to Canada to host the HEMA Secretariat. He mentioned that investment in a Secretariat would be a good investment and that this is an issue of inter-sessional commitment, not limited to hosting of the HEMA meeting. He then asked for comments from the floor:

- Southern Cone (Brazil) suggested that a new agency (e.g. Secretariat) not be created. Argentina offered to host the Secretariat function until June 2005 but agreed that a permanent follow-up structure is needed.
- North America (USA) supported the need for a "Secretariat" and asked a number of questions: Are we questioning whether OAS has a mandate to host the Secretariat? She mentioned that the Summit of the Americas provides a mandate for OAS to work on HEMA issues. She also addressed the need to maintain HEMA sustainability and pointed out that joint venture or partnership and sharing results receive budgeting priority from USA.
- OAS expressed its capacity to host the secretariat function.
- Andean region (Venezuela) supported the idea of HEMA secretariat.
- PAHO pointed out that participation and ownership of countries and continuity (i.e follow-up after the meeting) are key and none of the IGOs have enough money for follow-up. Agreeing with PAHO, UNEP mentioned that only PAHO has the mandate to work on health and that duplication of efforts should be avoided.
- Caribbean representative suggested that we need to be more specific and direct on tabling a real proposal or firm decision to recommend to the Ministers on a HEMA Secretariat as allocation of funding depends on Ministers.

Summing up the session, Argentina suggested that the three organizations (PAHO, UNEP-ROLAC and OAS) should come to a consensus on this issue and provide a revised proposal for discussion at the next meeting. The organizations agreed to this proposal.

DAY 2 Afternoon Session

Agenda Item 5C: Preparing for Ministerial Meeting Theme, Objectives and Desired Outcome of the Ministerial Meeting (contd.)

Canadian representative presented a one page flow chart explaining the relationship between HEMA priorities and MDGs. This places HEMA priority themes as a means to achieve selected millennium development goals. Canadian co-chair then asked the floor for comment:

- Southern Cone (Brazil) asked whether priority themes were only examples. In response, Argentina said that those priorities were agreed to at the Working Group meeting in Kingston.
- Andean representative said that the interrelationship is well-depicted but a deeper analysis is needed.
- PAHO complimented it as an interesting exercise and pointed out the need for building a greater alliance and reiterated the need to consider all the MDGs. UNEP supported PAHO's suggestion.
- Caribbean representative reminded the Group to look ahead rather than going back to the discussion on priorities and that focus should be on demonstrating how HEMA objectives contribute to MDGs.
- North American (USA) representative noted that the proposed chart is in the right direction - it now focuses on HEMA goals and use MDGs as context only.

Summing up the session, Dr. Savino mentioned that a difficult task is ahead of us and that an action plan on environmental health reflecting the interrelationship between HEMA goals and MDGs is necessary.

Agenda Item 7: Next Steps

- Argentina will host the HEMA Secretariat until June 2005. IGOs (PAHO, UNEP-ROLAC and OAS) will bring a joint proposal to host a secretariat after June 2005 for discussion at the next Working Group meeting.
- The meeting agenda will be revised. Argentina will be working with Canada and IGOs in developing and/or finalizing all necessary documents, and will also work on HEMA website issues.
- Comments on background documents and the updated HEMA inventory are due by December 15.
- Next Working Group meeting will be in February 2005 (timing and location TBD). Brazil may host the meeting but will provide confirmation to Argentina/Canada at a later date.
- Annex 1 lists the actions needed to be accomplished for HEMA ministerial meeting preparation.

Agenda Item 8 – Closing Remarks

Ray Edwards thanked the Group and call for Argentina for closing note. Dr. Savino thanked all for their goodwill and commitment and added that, if Brazil cannot host the next meeting, Argentina would be happy to host the Working Group meeting again.

Prepared by: Neeru Shrestha and Paula Martinez