

## Summary

### HEMA Information Session

Feb. 12, 2004

Washington D.C

#### General Comments

- Ray Edwards (Canada) and Andrea Brusco (Argentina) welcomed everyone to the meeting. Introductions followed.
- The session was very well attended. In all, approximately 40 people attended the session.
- PAHO, UNEP and OAS were all in attendance, as well as some of the main aid/donor agencies: World Bank, IDB, US AID. Some other organizations to note: the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, the OECD, the EU, and several country representatives (including the Ambassador from St. Kitts and Nevis, who was very vocal).
- The session was successful in that: several of the key organizations were at the table; the HEMA Task Force priorities and projects were presented and generally well received; the organizations presented their priorities, and offered advice on next steps.
- There is a bit more work to do regarding prioritizing the 15 proposed projects, following which some bilateral meetings with some of the key organizations should be organized.

#### Presentation:

- Ray Edwards and Andrea Brusco made a joint presentation on the origins of the HEMA initiative, its status, and the next steps. During the presentation, Mr. Edwards and Ms. Brusco turned to Ricardo Sanchez to describe the 15 proposed projects.
- After the presentation, Mr. Edwards and Ms. Brusco turned to the OAS, PAHO and UNEP for some remarks.
- OAS/Scott Vaughan highlighted the matrix in a background paper prepared for this meeting, and noted its usefulness.
- He also provided some guidance/advice, which included:
  - the need to look at some priorities within the 15 projects
  - identified opportunities wrt the water agenda in the hemisphere – which is also of global importance
  - noted it would be helpful, when looking at the priority projects, to also look at the comparative strengths between the existing institutions
  - noted it would be useful to provide some clarification of what benefits are from a multi-country approach to implementation, vis-à-vis a country level approach

- indicated that there is a huge amount of activity in areas such as chemicals, children's health, etc, and so it would be useful to figure out how the programmes of the World Bank, the IDB, etc, coincide with the HEMA agenda.
- PAHO/Luiz Galvao noted that one of the best products of this HEMA process was bringing the three agencies together (PAHO, UNEP, OAS). He also:
  - noted the real contribution of countries to the process
  - GEO Health and Environment: hoped that this could be delivered at HEMA 2 in Argentina and that this could be useful to reconfirm/revise HEMA priorities
  - recognized big involvement and future commitment of Gov't of Argentina
- UNEP/ROLAC: Ricardo Sanchez had already spoken about UNEP's commitment to this process prior to presenting the 15 projects, and therefore had nothing to add.

### **Discussion:**

A number of organizations participated in the discussion (CIDA; St. Kitts and Nevis; IDB; World Bank; EU; IDRC; US AID; US EPA). Some of the points raised included:

- Great deal of potential for complementarity with work of organizations. This information session is a good start at helping us understand what our respective priorities are, and where we want to focus our work.
- Broadness of proposed projects is both a strength and a weakness.
- For the most part, programming decisions are in response to a partner government's priorities – therefore most "aid" tends to be for bilateral programming (CIDA, WB, USAID, IDB). The compatibility of HEMA with countries' programme goals will vary from country to country. Limited funds are available to finance regional efforts.
- Some of these initiatives fit into what organizations can fund, but the challenge is to channel them through national programmes so that, for example, organizations such as IDB can fund them.
- A point was raised by EPA regarding potential economies of scale if you apply/fund these projects regionally rather than bilaterally (i.e. the needs are regional, but funds are bilateral). There was an argument made for identifying what synergies are possible at a regional level, and looking at how regional projects can contribute to strengthening national programmes. These projects, and the HEMA initiative, are meant to contribute to our capacity to deliver at the national level.
- A couple of individuals raised the issue of increased participation in the HEMA initiative (St. Kitts and Nevis, PAHO, CIDA, IDB):
  - There is a serious role for civil society in all of this, and HEMA needs to take this into account
  - Need to reach out to the private sector

- A lot of work done through NGOs – encourage HEMA to engage these organizations.
- Open up the HEMA process to involve more countries.
- Some concern (from St. Kitts and Nevis) about lack of reference to occupational health – focus is mostly on environment, but little related to the industrial aspects of health (e.g. lead in paints; pesticides).
- Suggestion was made that it would be useful to define what is the real cost of environmental degradation in terms of health and environment, and use this to identify priorities because we recognize we can't do everything
- There was support for activities which encourage good practices and innovative new ideas into mainstreaming of environment into country level development programmes (IDB)
- Another suggestion was made to concentrate in a few areas of intense work at the policy level -- work that leads more to a policy dialogue for Ministers
- When organizations spoke about their activities and opportunities for synergies with HEMA, some of the common activities included:
  - access to clean water and sanitation (CIDA; IDB; WB; EU; US AID)
  - watershed level management (IDB; IDRC)
  - solid waste management (WB; EU; IDRC)
  - wastewater operator training (CIDA)
  - chemicals and POPs, as well as links to occupational health (WB; EU prepared to offer info and experience; IDRC)
  - climate change and adaption to climate change (WB)
  - air pollution (WB)
  - indicators; children's health indicators (IDB, IDRC, US AID)

### **Wrap up:**

The co-chairs indicated:

- This meeting, and the Selected Activities document are just first steps.
- Working Group is meeting in March and what we've heard here will be good fodder for the discussion
- Heard the need to prioritize the 15 projects, and will do so.
- Feasibility and do-ability is an issue, and hearing from organizations re: their priorities have been important.
- Regarding involvement of civil society – Task Force has indeed been thinking about this.
- OAS/Scott Vaughan offered the following support:
  - Can provide some opportunities for public participation and civil society (strong re-iteration in Monterrey of the importance of civil society in the Summit process)
  - Could provide support regarding quantification of economic benefits of the HEMA agenda: UNEP doing work on environmental evaluation related to air/water quality. In cooperation with the Task Force, would be open at looking at any areas.

- Interested in helping to narrow down the 15 projects to some specific areas of priority (e.g. areas that lend themselves well to policy analysis).

Rita Cerutti  
February 16, 2004