

## **New Panel must boost resource-efficient growth and innovation, UN Environment Programme says**

### **New Scientific Panel on Sustainable Resource Management**

**Budapest/Nairobi/Paris, 9 November 2007** - Assessing the environmental risks of biofuel production and metal recycling are two of the issues likely to top the agenda of a newly formed global think tank on resource efficiency.

Launched here today at the World Science Forum, the new "International Panel for Sustainable Resource Management" will provide scientific assessments and expert advice on the use intensity, the security of supplies and the environmental impacts of selected products and services on a global level.

"Climate change rightly tops the environmental agenda at the moment, but the world faces more inconvenient truths that must be addressed," said Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which has established the panel.

"Economic growth in our modern times cannot be achieved with old consumption and production patterns - a point brought into sharp relief by our new Global Environment Outlook-4 which shows that collectively humans are over-utilizing the Earth's nature-based resources at a rate that is outstripping nature's ability to renew and replenish them," he said.

"We need to provide a boost to resource-efficient growth and innovation. We need to break the links between economic growth and environmental degradation, and finding ways to achieve this "decoupling" is what the new resource panel is all about."

Established by UNEP, with the support of a wide range of governments, the European Commission and representatives from civil society, the new scientific panel is part of an international partnership on resource management. It will look at the impacts on resources and materials used in all phases of their life cycle.

"Quadrupling resource-productivity worldwide (doubling wealth while halving resource use) is the smoothest avenue to sustainable development," according to Ernst Ulrich von Weizsaecker, Dean of the Donald Bren School of Environmental Science and Management at the University of California, and Co-chair of the Panel.

"We all agree that a lot more economic wealth is needed for six and a half billion people let alone nine billion people that we expect to live on earth by the middle of this century. On the other hand, we are already now overexploiting the earth. It is fair to say that we should reduce the consumption of carbon energy and other natural resources by roughly a factor of two. It is high time for the UN System to address the global resource challenges, and I feel honoured being invited to help on this exciting agenda", he said.

"Humanity is facing its most serious challenge in how to interact with the ecosystems that support us and all forms of life," said Ismail Serageldin, the other Panel Co-chair and Director of the Library of Alexandria. "We must find new and innovative ways to meet the needs of an expanding population, richer diets, and the appetite for energy. We must redesign the international and national policy environment so that it nurtures the development and promotes the introduction of these new ways world-wide."

The new International Panel for Sustainable Resource Management is expected to provide hard scientific and empirical assessments, written in a clear language about complex issues and reports which can be read by those who can take action.

It is hoped that the Panel will assess the situation at the global level and will advise which priority issues to address, for instance metal recycling (should we 'mine or recycle', and what are the environmental risks), or the complex issue of bio-based products (are we tackling climate change, or are we 'burning our food' as some say).

The Panel is supported by a Secretariat, hosted by the Sustainable Consumption and Production Branch of UNEP's Division of Technology, Industry and Economics, based in Paris. See [www.unep.fr](http://www.unep.fr)

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