



The International Panel on the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

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SPECIAL EVENT

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The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is in the process of establishing an International Panel on the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources ("Resource Panel").

This initiative is supported by the European Commission (EC), with an increasing number of countries expressing interest.

Prominent scientists will be invited to join the Panel as members. Government representatives are welcome to join the Board which will oversee the Panel's strategy, work programme and activities.

I. Objective and tasks

The overall objective of the Resource Panel is to provide independent scientific assessment on environmental impacts due to the use of natural resources over the full life cycle, and advise governments and international organisations on ways to reduce these identified impacts. This is to increase resource-efficient economic growth globally, and to stimulate sustainable innovation. As such, the Panel is expected to contribute to the overall policy goal of decoupling environmental impacts from economic growth.

The main tasks of the Panel are to:

Gather information on the use of natural resources and related environmental and sustainability impacts.

The Resource Panel will establish and maintain an up-to-date knowledge base on the use of natural resources and related environmental and other sustainability impacts over the full life-cycle. Related work will include identifying knowledge gaps and suggesting ways for establishing a prioritisation of natural resources to address and build consensus on definitions, indicators, and methodologies for measuring and monitoring progress achieved in decoupling at the international level.

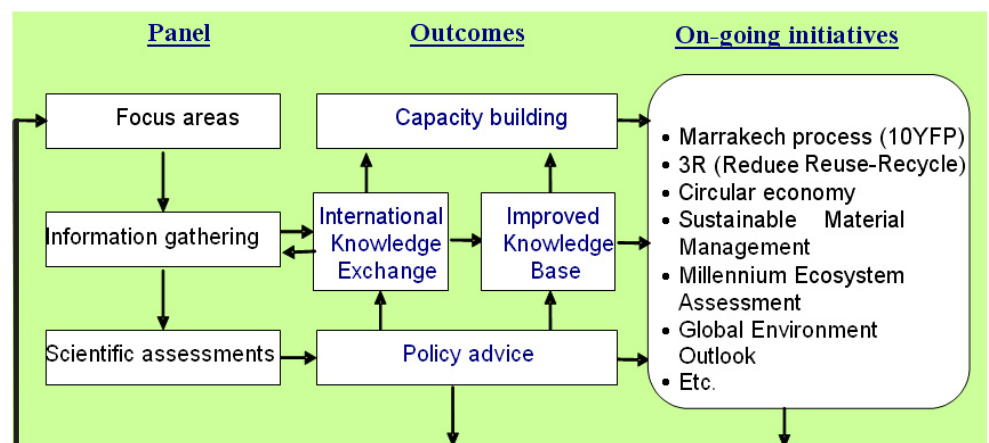
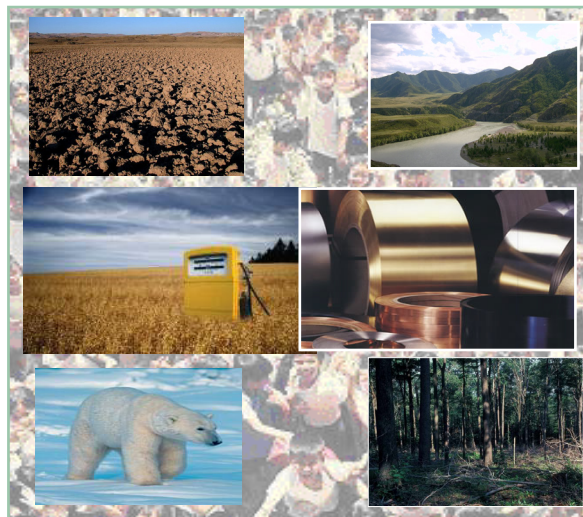
Provide scientific assessments on environmental impacts and policy advice on efficient use of natural resources.

With the prioritisation of natural resources to address, the Panel will provide scientific assessments of the environmental impacts of selected material flows of these focus areas, based on the state-of-the-art scientific knowledge. The findings will be translated into practical advice and recommendations to governments and international organisations on strategies and options for reducing the identified impacts.

These activities build on and will contribute to other related international initiatives, including the development of the 10-year framework on sustainable consumption and production (Marrakech process), the 3R (reduce, reuse and recycle) initiative, the circular economy approach, Global Environment Outlook and the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment.

Support capacity building and international knowledge exchange on the use of natural resources.

The Panel will identify knowledge and capacity gaps in developing and transition countries and suggest options to overcome obstacles, by means of capacity building, training, education, demonstration projects and international knowledge exchange. In this way and through the geographical balance in the composition of the Panel as well as its working groups, capacity will be developed in countries where it is needed.



II. Operational and organisational issues

The Resource Panel will have up to 20 members, all internationally recognised experts in their field. Due regard to adequate geographical and gender balance will be given when selecting panel members.

Panel meetings will be held not more than twice per year. Working groups can address specific issues and will work in close consultation with existing national and international centres of excellence.

A Trust Fund will be set up to enable governments and international organisations to financially support the activities of the Panel.

The Board, consisting of representatives from governments, the EC, UNEP and other international organisations, approves rolling three-year and annual work programmes and budgets, as proposed by the Panel. The Board is also expected to appoint the Chair and members of the Panel (for periods of two years, with possibilities for renewal).

The Panel will be supported by a Secretariat, hosted by the Sustainable Consumption and Production Branch at UNEP's Division of Technology, Industry and Economics, based in Paris.

III. Progress to date

Preparation of preliminary scoping studies to assist the Panel

Various scoping studies are underway. They will be used as background materials to identify focus areas for the work of the Panel in the first few years.

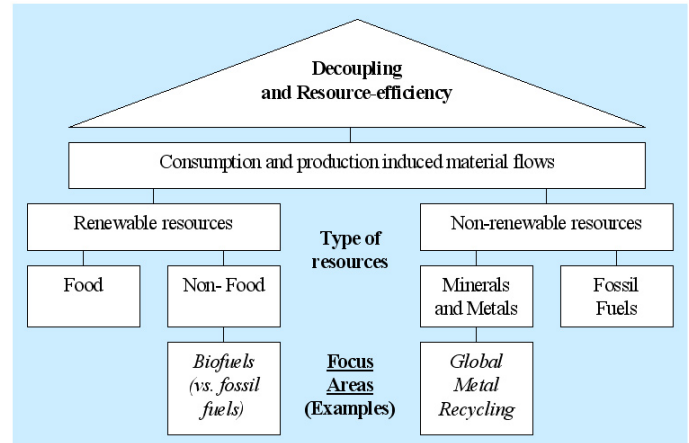
Pre-panel and pre-board meetings

Pre-panel and pre-board meetings were held in Brussels, Belgium on 8 December 2006, back to back with a scientific conference session on sustainable resource management (Bruges, Belgium 6-7 Dec 2006). These meetings were organised to brainstorm potential focus areas for consideration by the panel members at the Inaugural Meeting of the International Panel on the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources.

Representatives from the EC, Brazil, Canada, China and Japan took part in the pre-board meeting, and welcomed the Panel's focus on the sustainable and efficient use of natural resources from a material flow and life cycle perspective.

Therefore, as a first step, the Panel is expected to focus on selected consumption and production induced material flows using renewable and non-renewable resources.

These flows can be classified under four types of resources: food and non-food cluster, and minerals/metals and fossil fuels cluster. In line with this approach, two focus areas of immediate policy relevance were suggested during the December 2006 meeting: Biofuels and global metal recycling.



The selected material flows linked to the focus areas will be assessed with regard to their environmental and other sustainability impacts, taking issues such as global warming, biodiversity, land use, toxicity and water quality as cross-cutting impacts to be considered systematically.

In addition, it was suggested that as a long-term objective, the Panel may wish to consider presenting a global vision on alternative socio-economic development scenarios based on sustainable and efficient use of natural resources.

IV. Next steps

The next milestones for establishing the Panel are a second pre-board meeting tentatively scheduled in April 2007, and the Inaugural Panel meeting planned for June 2007.

UNEP and partners would like to therefore seek expressions of interest from governments, and invite comments and suggestions from interested stakeholders during the 24th session of the Governing Council in Nairobi, Kenya.

For more information & suggestions:

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