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United Nations Environment Programme

UNEP's work in the field of
technology, industry and
economics

30 years of engaging the private sector to mainstream sustainable development ...

The year 2005 marks the 30th anniversary of the UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (UNEP DTIE), based in Paris, France. Its creation was a consequence of the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE), held in Stockholm to define an international response to the environmental impacts caused by industrialization and population growth. UNCHE established UNEP, with its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, to monitor the state of the world's environment and catalyze action for its protection.

It soon appeared that promoting environmental care in industrial development required the creation of an office that would be dedicated to deal with industry. The result was the creation in 1975 of what was then called the UNEP Industry & Environment Office. The French government offered to host the new office in Paris.

The birth of the Paris office came in the year when the hole in the ozone layer above Antarctica first appeared. Addressing ozone depletion was one of the first work areas where UNEP engaged the private sector in an international effort. The convening of a Coordinating Committee for the Ozone Layer, following a UNEP Governing Council decision in the mid 1970s, included an invitation to industry representatives to attend its meetings and join the ongoing co-ordination of research and assessments. Business involvement and representation in the form of individual companies and associations increased at meetings over the next ten years.

UNEP's then Executive Director, Maurice Strong, asked **Léon de Rosen** to head the new Paris office. UNEP pays tribute to its first director, who died on August 7th, 2004. Born in 1912, Mr de Rosen started as a worker in a car factory before he eventually became the company's deputy director. He then managed several big companies and encouraged the incorporation of environmental criteria in industrial production. His long experience in the industrial sector allowed him to lay the foundations for the future work of UNEP DTIE.

De Rosen had always considered close collaboration and partnership with industrial companies a very important way for the UNEP Industry & Environment Office to achieve its goals. His successor, **Dominique Larré**, pursued the same strategy. In 1984 the UNEP Industry & Environment Office and the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), also located in Paris, staged the first *World Industry Conference on Environmental Management (WICEM)* in Versailles. This was the start of an annual consultative meeting hosted by UNEP DTIE with industry associations. The 1984 conference brought more than 500 government and business representatives together to examine how companies could meet the growing challenge and concerns posed by citizens with respect to the long-term effects of pollution on the health of our planet. Its success led to WICEM II in 1991 and to the launch of the ICC Business Charter for Sustainable Development, a set of 16 principles for environmental management which has become basic code for many businesses. The longstanding relationship between UNEP and the

ICC has in many ways been breaking ground by exploring fruitful collaboration between a UN agency and a private sector organization.

New industry initiatives were often spurred by shock events. Accidents such as the 1976 chemical accident in Seveso (Italy), the 1984 gas leak in Bhopal (India) and the 1986 Chernobyl (Ukraine) nuclear power plant accident made clear the urgent need for appropriate measures. In 1988, UNEP in cooperation with the chemical industry, established APELL (Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies at Local Level) to help prevent and deal with industrial accidents.

In the following year the UNEP I&E Office launched the “Cleaner Production” programme. It was set up to promote pollution prevention at source and the efficient use of raw materials, so that goods and services are produced with the minimum environmental impact under present technological and economic limits. The cleaner production concept was actively promoted by the new UNEP I&E Director, **Jacqueline Aloisi de Larderel**. Before joining UNEP in 1988, Mrs Aloisi de Larderel was employed by the French Ministry of the Environment, initially as the head of the Waste Division and subsequently as the Deputy Director of the Pollution Prevention Directorate. In 1995 she received the René Dubos Center's Environmental Award, in recognition of her outstanding contribution to the environment, and in particular for her leadership in the global development of the Cleaner Production programme.

In 1991, as an implementing agency of the Multilateral Fund for the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, the UNEP Industry & Environment Office created the OzonAction programme to provide technical and policy information to assist developing countries phase out their use of ozone-depleting substances. In 2005 the OzonAction programme was awarded Stratospheric Ozone Award from the US Environmental Protection Agency for leadership and innovation in assisting developing countries in ozone protection.

While the first two decades of the UNEP Industry & Environment Office showed a focus on heavy industry (for example mining, chemicals, iron & steel), activities since the mid-1990s showed an expanded focus on activities with “light” or service industries such as tourism, financial services, advertising and telecommunications. This is confirmed by looking at special editions of the *Industry & Environment* publication. Early approaches to environmental pollution in the 1970s focused on dilution and treatment. Over the years, focus shifted towards recycling and cleaner production. The 1990s also saw a move towards life cycle economy approaches and a growing emphasis on Sustainable Consumption, an area in which UNEP launched programmatic activities in 1998. This followed the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, Rio Earth Summit), which confirmed the crucial role of industry as a partner in sustainable development. The central outcome of the Summit, Agenda 21, called in its Chapter 30 on industry and business associations to “encourage individual companies to undertake programmes for improved environmental awareness and responsibility...”.

In 1998, UNEP Executive Director Klaus Toepfer introduced a new functional structure to the organisation. One result of this re-organisation was the transformation of what since 1992 was called the Industry and Environment Programme Activity Centre (IE/PAC), to become the **Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE)**. This Division consisted of Units (today Branches) operating from Paris and Geneva, dealing with Production & Consumption, Energy, OzonAction, Chemicals, Economics and Trade. The Chemicals Office subsequently oversaw the development of the new international chemicals conventions. The Economics and Trade Unit undertook new case study research on the environmental impact of trade liberalisation in developing regions agriculture. The International Environmental Technology Centre (IETC), inaugurated in Japan in 1992, was also incorporated under UNEP DTIE. The creation of IETC followed a UNEP Governing Council decision to further strengthen UNEP's role in sustainable urban and freshwater basin management.

UNEP DTIE continued to be active in engaging business and industry, among others by involving individual companies in voluntary initiatives and partnerships on an industry sector basis. This included co-launching the Global Reporting Initiative process in 1997 and representing UNEP as one of the core agencies involved in the UN Global Compact, launched by Secretary-General

Kofi Annan in 2000. The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), held in Johannesburg in 2002, showed greater focus on business and industry as being part of the solution and on partnership formation. This was familiar terrain for UNEP DTIE in its work with the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) and other business organizations. In a key contribution to WSSD, UNEP DTIE facilitated the preparation of 22 sector reports by international industry associations and organizations. These sector reports evaluated progress towards sustainable development and outlined future challenges. Another highlight of the WSSD was the decision to promote a ten-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production (later called the Marrakech process). UNEP DTIE's Production and Consumption Branch has organized a worldwide consultation process between 2003 and 2005, and is leading the current implementation phase. The Energy Branch is building a network of developing country centres of excellence, as part of the Global Network on Energy for Sustainable Development that it launched at WSSD.

In 2005 UNEP DTIE followed up on the industry sector reports process by initiating the preparation by business and industry of sector Report Cards for discussions on "Industrial Development" at the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) from 2006 onwards. This has been undertaken under the leadership of **Monique Barbut**, new Director of UNEP DTIE since 2003. Prior to her appointment as director of UNEP DTIE, Mrs. Barbut was in charge of operations with the French overseas departments and territories in her capacity as an Executive Director at the Agence Française de Développement Group (AfD), France's principal executing agency for project aid. Based on her longstanding experience in development financing, she is introducing greater focus on project-based implementation and linkage with poverty reduction strategies in developing countries. At a time of assessing early progress made with delivering the UN Millennium Development Goals, this focus presents a natural evolution towards exploring the involvement of business and industry through partnerships in the developing world.

At 30 years, UNEP DTIE today strengthens its work with business and industry, including labour unions and related stakeholder organisations, in its mission to encourage decision-makers to advance policies, strategies, business models and operations that show greater care for humans and the environment.

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