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Major environmental trends, potential problems and priorities for action for the United Nations system, co-ordinated by the United Nations Environment Programme during the period 1982-1992

5. Considers that the United Nations system must be alert to and retain the necessary programme flexibility for addressing major environmental trends and problems which may emerge or become more pronounced during the coming decade.

6. The trends, problems and priorities for action which should receive attention by the United Nations system, and specifically through the system-wide programme activities co-ordinated by UNEP are listed below:

(a) Atmosphere

Trends and problems: Continued deterioration in urban air quality in developing countries and, in the case of some pollutants, in developed countries, long-range transport of air pollution, including SO₂ and NO_x emissions that give rise to acid rains, continued increase of CO₂, other trace gases and particulates in the atmosphere, possible depletion of stratospheric ozone, possible effects of human activities on weather and climate, extreme meteorological events such as tropical cyclones, floods and droughts;

Priority for action: Integrated monitoring of atmospheric pollutants and their effects, development and promotion of appropriate global, regional and national programmes; guidelines or conventions to respond to these problems; improvement of early-warning indicators for extreme meteorological events; understanding of factors affecting climate, including ocean-atmosphere interactions;

(b) Oceans

Trends and problems: Increasing pollution of the seas with oil and other substances from land-based sources, through the atmosphere and from ships; pollution of estuaries and coastal waters; overfishing; environmentally inappropriate exploitation of marine and coastal resources, despite expansion of mariculture and protected areas;

Priority for action: Development and application of methods for monitoring, assessing, reducing and preventing: (i) pollution of the seas, including oil pollution; (ii) degradation of natural resources including mangrove and coral areas; development of new and strengthening of existing programmes and conventions for the environmental protection of regional seas; further development of plans and procedures for the management of marine resources; further development of mariculture and the establishment of marine protected areas; and support for disaster mitigation;