Int Environ Agreements (2007) 7:439–455
DOI 10.1007/s10784-007-9050-6

ORIGINAL PAPER

Norway in UN environmental policies: ambitions and influence

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Published online: 29 August 2007

Abstract This is a study of Norway's ambitions for influencing UN environmental policies and then on the scope for impact. On the whole, it is clear that Norway has not been particularly successful in its general efforts at strengthening UNEP. These proposals have failed, due mainly to opposition from key states. Norway is after all a minor player in global governance issues, even in those pertaining to the environment. Norway has been more successful in efforts that indirectly strengthen UNEP, by supporting UNEP in initiating new MEAs. We found three main factors that help to explain why Norway has a relatively high level of influence at the international environmental arena compared to its size. First, there is a relatively straightforward domestic decision-making process with little conflict. Second, Norwegian officials and NGOs possess considerable expertise in these issues, adding to the intellectual leadership role of Norway in pushing for new principles and international legislation through UNEP. Third, Norway is sometimes able to join forces in environmental alliances with other like-minded countries. This would seem to carry the widest scope for increasing impact.

Keywords Global environmental governance · UNEP · Norway · UN environmental policies · CSD

Abbreviations

CSD	Commission for sustainable development
EMG	Environment management group
ESS 2005	European social survey report
GEF	Global environmental facility
GMEF	Global ministerial environment forum
IEG	Intergovernmental environmental governance
MEA	Multilateral environmental agreement
MFA	Ministry of foreign affairs
MoE	Ministry of the environment

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NHO	Umbrella organisation of Norwegian industry
ODA	Official development assistance
UNCED	UN conference on environment and development
UNEP	United nations environmental programme
WCSD	World commission on sustainable development
WSSD	World summit on sustainable development

1 Introduction

Norway is a small country with limited influence on the international scene. Within the United Nations, however, it has become a significant player, known for its contributions to the UN in general as well as to relevant environmental agencies, institutions and organisations. In this article, I focus first on the domestic decision-making process aimed at UN environmental policies and second on the scope for Norwegian influence in UN environmental policies.

I begin with a brief outline of the main elements of Norwegian foreign environmental policies and how they have developed over time. Who are the main actors, and what are their position, role and influence? The two most visible are the Ministry of the Environment (MoE) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), but there are other governmental as well as non-governmental bodies involved as well. Is the policy-making process one of amicable co-ordination—or are turf battles and conflicting interests the name of the game?

The second part provides a brief outline of Norway's role in relation to the UN in general, as well as summarising Norwegian international environmental policy from Stockholm 1972, through the Rio Summit in 1992, and beyond. The major focus here is on the scope for Norwegian influence, mostly through and within UNEP, but the Global Conferences, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) are also dealt with. As natural and central player in UN environmental governance, UNEP has been an important target for Norwegian foreign environmental policies, and Norway has maintained a high profile in efforts to revitalise UNEP.

There can be no doubt about Norway's leadership ambitions when it comes to global environmental governance. Among the various types of leadership, *intellectual* and *entrepreneurial leadership* would seem to be the most relevant tools for Norway to exert influence, given its role and position (see Young 1991). Entrepreneurial actions can be linked to tapping the integrative potential among negotiating parties and acting as brokers, while intellectual leaders rely on the power of ideas and knowledge to shape how participants understand the issues at stake (Young 1991, p. 294). This could stem from the high degree of continuity and expertise invested in Norwegian foreign environmental policy. The potential for building alliances would also seem crucial, and here there could be a potential for strengthening the entrepreneurial role. In this context I will consider relations between Norway and the European Union, seeking to shed light on the ongoing Norwegian debate of the advantages and disadvantages of remaining outside the EU when operating on the international stage. In short, I ask whether Norway is able to exert influence in various UN environmental arenas and bodies—or is it being squeezed between the large power-blocs of the USA, the EU and the G-77?

The study bases its empirical material largely on interviews with central actors in the decision-making processes as well as with actors outside the upper tiers of the Norwegian civil service and administration. Many external interviews have been made with actors in UNEP as well as actors centrally placed in the Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEA) secretariats, permitting a wide range of views to be expressed.[1] This allows us to bring out a variety of perceptions about influence. Still, there remains a methodological problem: actors closely linked to the Norwegian civil service and administration will naturally be inclined to inflate the scope for influence, as well as its actual level. On the other hand, actors outside this circle will be less knowledgeable about what has taken place and may find it hard to assess the difficult question of the influence of one particular actor in a multilateral game.

2 Norway, the UN and global environmental governance

Since it was established, the UN has been a cornerstone in Norwegian foreign policy: moreover, the first UN General Secretary was the Norwegian Trygve Lie. A recent European Social Survey Report (ESS, 2005) found that Norway topped the list of 'trust in the UN', with 78 per cent, as against the European mean score of only 44 per cent. In Pamela Chasek's chapter (this volume), we can note that the proportion of the US public with a favourable opinion of the UN has recently dwindled from 59 to 48 per cent (March to October 2005) (Pew 2005).[2] The widespread positive perceptions in Norway have been emphasised politically through considerable financial support to most UN activities, particularly in peacekeeping and conflict mediation, development, and—the focus in this chapter—the environment. Such strong support has officially rested upon the UN's compatibility with Norway's moralistic tradition and its belief in the organisation-society based on justice and institutions, seeking to transform institutional models from the national to the international level (Eriksen and Pharo 1997). Overall, there has been firm domestic political consensus for Norway's direct financial contributions to the UN. Norway has been—and remains—a true believer in multilateralism as the way to strengthen the UN system and the world society more generally. Norway scores particularly high in terms of development assistance channelled through the UN system—especially relevant in our context, considering the increasingly close link between development and the environment. Today Norway is the fifth largest contributor to UN development activities in absolute terms, and also ranks high in per capita terms. It is the second largest contributor to the UNDP and is among the handful of countries in the world to have fulfilled the UN goal (set as early as in 1970!) of an ODA level of at least 0.7% of GNP.

Clearly, the contrast to the USA, as the one remaining superpower, is striking on all these dimensions. Seen from a traditional interest-based perspective, however, this is not so surprising: it may simply be in the self-interest of Norway, as a small law-abiding country, to seek to strengthen the world organisation. On the other hand, it has been argued that the value-based aspect, in line with social constructivist line of thought, should not be disregarded either (Holm 2005)—not least when we recall the diminishing favourable opinion concerning the UN system among the US public. Be this as it may, the general positive

[1] See also Andresen and Rosendal (forthcoming 2007).

[2] The US and the EU rankings may not be directly comparable, as 'trust' may have stronger connotations than mere 'favourable opinion'.

perception of the UN in Norway can shed some light on Norwegian attitudes and actions relating to the role of the UN in global environmental governance.

Examination of Norwegian official statements in various governmental reports shows that Norway has long been a 'pusher' in terms of global environmental governance, and the UN has played a key role in that equation. The present Oslo government has explicitly stated its ambition for Norway to serve as a leader in global environmental policy, and this is a central point in the *Soria Moria declaration* (2005), on which the three-party government rests. Norway's international role as bridge-builder between the developing and developed countries also regarding the environment takes us even further back than the Brundtland legacy of the late 1980s. The bridge-builder role itself is based on the country's non-colonial past. Norway therefore supported the establishment of UNEP, as well as the locating of its headquarters in Nairobi. An illustration of the UN as important for environmental institution-building in Norway is that it was in the aftermath of the first UN environmental conference in Stockholm in 1972 that Norway established its own Ministry of the Environment. The fact that it was a Norwegian who was appointed to head the UN World Commission on Sustainable Development (Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland)[3] did not exactly weaken Norwegian belief in the UN system. The Commission's report, *Our Common Future*, (WCSD 1987) is probably among the most important UN documents ever produced on this topic. It introduced the concept 'sustainable development' and set the stage for the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

The late 1980s and the early 1990s generally were the heyday of Norwegian environmental enthusiasm. Acid rain and the Chernobyl accident, the discovery of the ozone hole, the 'Brundtland Report', vast fields of algae blooming in the North Sea—all created fertile ground for 'green activism' in the public as well as among decision-makers in the OECD region—with Norway at the fore. In fact, during the 1989 Norwegian general elections, the environment was the number one issue for voters; and in an international survey from 1992, 72% of the Norwegian respondents said they would give priority to protecting the environment before economic growth (Andresen and Butenschøn 2001). The Ministry of the Environment and green NGOs dominated the scene, while more reluctant actors (politically heavyweight ministries as well as industry) had yet to enter. In White Paper no. 46 (1988–89) on the follow-up to the Brundtland Commission, it became official Norwegian policy to stand forth as a pusher and a leader on the international environmental arena. At this time Norway developed five goals for foreign environmental policy: cost efficiency, integrating environmental concerns into every sector, adhering to international agreements, basing decisions on scientific advice as well as the precautionary principle, and promoting development in the Third World (Skjærseth 2004, p. 6).

Acid rain, Chernobyl and the green ideal of cost efficiency provide important clues concerning Norway's interest in the establishment of multilateral environmental agreements. At that time, Norway was generally on the receiving end of environmental problems generated elsewhere, and was in that sense far more vulnerable to the environmental actions of other countries than, for instance, the USA may ever have perceived itself to be. In addition, Norway was largely successful in its foreign environmental efforts, for instance in curbing pollution from the 'dirty old man of Europe', the UK, and thereby greatly reducing the problem of acid rain in Norway (Wettestad 2004).

[3] Gro Harlem Brundtland was Norwegian Environmental Minister at the time, then Prime Minister, and subsequently head of the World Health Organisation (1998–2003).

An examination of official documents reveals that Norway's attention to environmental problems peaked in the aftermath of the Brundtland Commission Report (WCSD 1987) and with the advent of the Rio Conference (1992). This has been a fairly uniform trend in all OECD countries: the environment is simply not as politically 'hot' as it was a decade or so ago. Apart from the usual public cyclical ups and down with such 'soft' issues, one reason for the waning enthusiasm may be that the world has gradually entered the *implementation stage*. In contrast to agenda-setting, implementation is a long, complex and not least costly process. Moreover, Norway scores far lower on domestic implementation than its very high profile on the international scene would imply (Skjærseth ed. 2004). To some extent this has also affected Norway's activities and ambitions on the international scene. For example, more funding—in absolute terms—was provided for Norway's preparations to Rio in 1992 compared to Johannesburg in 2002.[4] Generally speaking, the Norwegian view of these global conferences is that they have reached the stage where their usefulness is largely outweighed by the enormous resources spent on them. In their time, however, they have made a genuine and important contribution in focusing political and media attention on global environmental issues, as well as in enhancing the participation of civil society.[5] It has also been argued that while Norway was able to act as a leader in Rio, due not least to Gro Harlem Brundtland's role, it was less successful on that account in Johannesburg.[6] This could be taken to indicate that Norway's feeling of exhaustion with global conferences has a parallel in reduced leadership. As will be shown, however, this has had scant effect on the country's generally high profile in the UN environmental arena, most notably within UNEP.

3 Domestic decision-making: organisation and co-ordination

This section draws attention to the relationship between internal domestic policy processes and the scope for external clout. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Ministry of Environment (MoE) are decidedly the most central actors in the policy process. In addition, Norway's NGO community has played a rather influential role. Central actors from all parts of the decision-making process agree that in general co-ordination is smooth. Relations between the MFA and MoE are good, with daily and or at least weekly contact. As far as UNEP is concerned, it is the Minister of the Environment that is the responsible political leader on the part of Norway. The minister participates in meetings of the UNEP Governing Council and develops the Norwegian positions in co-operation with the MFA. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has overall responsibility for developing relevant Norwegian positions directed at the UN system and ODA in general. The MoE puts considerable effort into being pro-active, requesting the advice of the MFA and inviting the ministry into the decision-making processes that relate to UNEP.[7] The MFA, on its part, views the expertise and continuity in the MoE as assets. Still, as the two ministries are responsible for different sets of concerns, this may lead to some discrepancies in their policy goals.

[4] Interview with Idunn Eidheim, head executive for the Johannesburg Summit, 2 September 2002.

[5] Interview with two senior civil servants at MFA 15 October 2002, MoE 27 September 2002, and MFA 25 September 2002.

[6] Interview with Chinese policymakers, November 2004.

[7] Interview, MoE 6 July 2005.

One example is the Intergovernmental Environmental Governance (IEG) process. This is by definition within the purview of the MFA, as a topic within overall UN reform. It has been in the interest of the MoE to have this process closely linked to UNEP. In this endeavour, the MoE is strengthened by the continuity of their expertise relating to the IEG process, as they have been involved throughout the entire history of the process. The direct affinity for UNEP is less pronounced in the MFA, where responsibility for UNEP is actually split: the Development & Aid divisions of the MFA work with the financial aspects, while matters relating to UN reform are controlled by the ministry itself. This division supports the argument of the MoE that the MFA may at times be more focused on organisational questions than with actual environmental problem-solving.[8] It also points up the inherent tensions that may naturally occur between long-term environmental and more immediate developmental concerns.[9]

An example of the smooth domestic decision-making process is found in the way NGOs are included—or rather the specific NGO that has been granted this position. FORUM is an umbrella organisation for environmental and developmental organisations and has been active ever since its establishment prior to the UNCED Conference in 1992. It enjoys an extremely harmonious relationship with the MoE and MFA and is included in all delegations, preparatory meetings and discussions concerning UNEP and the CSD.[10] At the WSSD in Johannesburg, Norway financed the participation of 36 Norwegian NGOs under the FORUM umbrella.[11] Ministry officials emphasise the expert advice and the international network of other NGOs, largely provided by FORUM, as important assets[12] that can be helpful in finding practical and concrete proposals during negotiations. FORUM has the privilege of deciding which of its partner NGOs will join in the various delegations and fora. The shifting balance between environmental and developmental emphasis in foreign environmental policy is supported by the history of FORUM itself. At the time of Rio, the environment was the dominant concern; since then, the pendulum shifted towards an increasing focus on developmental aspects. At present, FORUM has the impression that a balance is slowly returning between the two.[13] The view that there has come a greater environmental focus is not shared by the MoE, however.

On the whole, it may be argued that the domestic decision-making process on Norwegian foreign environmental policy is not very complicated. This relatively simple domestic process feeds, however, into a rather more complex international decision-making scene that includes a wide range of fora and organisations. For a good example of the complexity we can take Norwegian decisions relating to the CSD. The CSD deals with social, economic and environmental issues and, in effect, the sector ministries often deal with relevant aspects. However, as in most countries, getting industry to participate proved difficult, but the umbrella organisation of Norwegian industry (NHO) is now becoming more involved in CSD preparations. Again, the MFA has overall responsibility for co-coordinating the process. A central goal for the MoE is that the relevant sector ministers should also be represented in the CSD, so as to instil in them a sense of greater responsibility for decisions reached in this forum. The idea is that, for example, energy issues

[8] "The MFA is more concerned with questions of organisation (in the larger UN framework) than with problem-solving for the environment." Interview, MoE, 6 July 2005.

[9] Interview at MFA, 17 February 2006.

[10] Interview, FORUM, 25 November 2005.

[11] Interview at FORUM, 25 September 2002 and at MFA, 25 September 2002.

[12] Interview at MFA, 17 February 2006.

[13] Interview, FORUM, 25 November 2005.

would be treated more effectively if the Ministers of Energy actually assembled there. This would boost the influence of the CSD and elevate it beyond the meagre clout of environmental ministers. As it is, Norway is wary of the UN system controlling natural resources, most particularly fish. In effect, the MFA division dealing with CSD is also responsible for fisheries management and oil. In comparison to these vital national interests the CSD looks rather small within the division, and only a few people actually deal with it. The perceived need to tone down certain aspects of the CSD agenda most likely relates to sensitivity concerning sovereignty over natural resources; in the case of Norway, this sensitivity is high with regard to fisheries management.[14] When MoE Minister Børge Brende led the CSD this direct MFA interest increased, but since then the scope for MoE influence has again increased. The bottom line is that what may seem like straightforward decisions from the domestic level add up to a complex variety of demands at the receiving end in the UN system.

The mix between environmental interests and central national interests in this relatively straightforward domestic decision-making process indicates that the harmony may be less enduring than the actors would like to believe. It should perhaps come as no surprise that there has been no demand for active UNEP involvement in governing north east Atlantic fisheries or offshore petroleum activities.[15] It is food for thought that among the interests represented in these decision-making processes the private sector and industry seldom find it worthwhile to participate.[16] As with the absence of sector ministries, this would seem likely to weaken the outputs with a view to future implementation efforts. Still, the overall message is that Norway is indeed a small country with a small administrative apparatus, and that it is less problematic to co-ordinate decisions than in most other countries. Compared to less co-ordinated states, this would seem to constitute a good basis for influence. In addition, there is the influence that springs from Norway's positive and decidedly generous UN policy. We will review more evidence of this as we look into examples that allow for a discussion of influence, particularly in UNEP.

4 Norway and UN environmental governance: donations—but less leadership?[17]

4.1 Financial support

Since the mid-1990s, Norwegian attention to environmental problems has been steadily declining, as poverty and development issues increasingly replace (or intertwine with) the environment on the political agenda.[18] At the same time, Norway has become more explicit in referring to the need to strengthen UNEP also in budgetary terms. From the official statements and documents addressing these issues, we find that the aims for strengthening UNEP can be found throughout the 1980s and 1990s. White Paper no. 46 (1988–89) on the follow-up of the report of the Brundtland World Commission on

[14] Interview, MoE, 6 July 2005.

[15] Thanks to external reviewer for highlighting this point.

[16] Interview at MFA, 17 February 2006.

[17] Building on Note from civil servant to MoE, 13 May 2004 (unofficial) and press release from MoE 3/2 1997 and 16/1 2003 and contribution from Norway—17/12 2001, IEG, Montreal. Interviews, MoE, 6 July 2005.

[18] This is also apparent in Norwegian development cooperation, which has been repeatedly criticised for its grave shortcomings in environmental quality and implementation (WWF 2005; Rosendal 2004).

Sustainable Development identifies strengthening UNEP financially as an important task. Moreover, the view that links environment and development is apparent from early on, as White Papers ever since 1984–85 draw the line from Norwegian development aid and UNEP's work in environmental assistance in developing countries. White Paper no. 46 (1988–89) brings in sustainable development as a new, main goal in Norwegian foreign policy.

In White Paper no. 25 (2002–2003) the government reiterates the objective that UNEP should become a specialised agency under the UN. Finally, White Paper no 21 (2004–2005) identifies the major global environmental challenges as climate change, loss of biodiversity, and chemicals/pollutants. Special attention is given to the goal of strengthening UNEP as the central authority and think-tank in global environmental work. UNEP's roles in initiating global regulations, in capacity-building, in co-ordinating the MEAs, and in providing scientific and technical advice are also emphasised. There is increasing recognition that UNEP should focus on a more limited set of priorities, rather than trying to do everything. Core activity areas could be early warning & monitoring, assisting implementation of MEAs, and environmental legislation & capacity-building in developing countries.[19] This could help UNEP to develop competence and establish itself as an expert body. Norway's support to UNEP in actual budgetary allocations is not difficult to trace, but it has remained high. The most important shift took place in 2005/2006, when financial contributions were reoriented from being project-based with strings attached. Now funding is given through MoUs in the form of general contributions. Let us take a closer look at how these and other decisions concerning UNEP are reached.

The backdrop for this section is the relatively large share of Norway's financial contributions (compared to most other countries) to the UN system, and to UNEP in particular. The main bulk of international environmental funding goes through the GEF. Comparing UNEP and GEF, today 92 per cent of GEF funding goes through other bodies than UNEP.[20] Put together with the other Nordic countries, Norway's contributions to UNEP have sometimes been as high as one third of the total. All in all, Norway contributes about one sixth of UNEP's total budget.[21] That is a high share for such a small country, with a population of less than 5 million. At the same time, contributions from potentially large donors such as the USA, UK, Japan and even Germany have fallen steadily (Ivanova 2005, p. 36). In 2003 UNEP received US$4.73million from the regular budget, trust funds were at US$80.7million, and earmarked contributions US$41.5million.[22] The final sum is much larger when GEF and other cooperation funds are included in the total budget, exceeding US$400million (Ivanova 2005).

Important is not only the amount that sets Norway aside as a contributor, but also the form in which the funds are donated. Most donors—also Norway—have been criticised for hamstringing UNEP with too much earmarked funding (Hansen and Fergus 2005). As a result, Norway along with a few other countries (Sweden, Belgium and Ireland) has agreed

[19] Interview at MFA, 17 February 2006.

[20] UNEP receives merely 8%, which amounts to about US$7.5 million. However, it is pointed out that even 8% represents a considerable sum—US$7.5 million—and with its present capacity UNEP would be able to absorb no more than about twice that sum. Interview, MoE, 6 July 2005.

[21] The MoE provides NOK 15 million directly to UNEP, there is support to UNEP's regional offices of about 10 million, and in addition general funding, at around NOK 35 million. With the new framework agreement of 2005/2006, this latter share has risen to NOK 55 million, adding up to about US$11million altogether.

[22] http://www.unep.org/rmu/en/Financing_of_UNEP/Environment_Fund/index.asp

to allow UNEP more space for manoeuvring by channelling the funding through framework agreements.

What does Norway expect to get in return and to what extent are these expectations realised? In order to shed light on this, we need to look at specific proposals for UNEP that have been supported by Norway, and then see whether these have been carried out. It is the latter that can give us an indication of the actual influence that Norway wields.

4.2 Ambitions for UN environmental policies

Specific activities aimed at strengthening UNEP seem to have intensified recently. An example of Norway's efforts to promote UNEP in its core roles is its advocacy of UNEP as the appropriate scientific panel for global environmental issues. First, this link is strengthened by the GRID Arendal facility, an institute for environmental early warning based in southern Norway, and which, since 2001, has functioned as a full UNEP centre. Second, Norway has also had close working relations with UNEP on the scientific and technological follow-up process of the Convention on Biological Diversity, by hosting five international conferences (the Trondheim Conferences). Third, through the International Environmental Governance (IEG) process, Norway has endeavoured to boost the scientific role of UNEP. An Intergovernmental Panel for Assessing Global Environmental Change was proposed by the Committee of Permanent Representatives in Nairobi in 2002. Norwegian officials also explored the possibility of creating a UNEP Science Advisory Panel; a former MoE official, Ivar Baste, was central in this work.[23] However, this effort failed, as did similar attempts to transform UNEP into a World Environment Organisation, because the USA feared that such a scientific panel with government-appointed representatives would end up as a politicised body.

Another example is how Norway has been active in promoting UNEP's core role in capacity-building and in advocating greater roles for the Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF) and the Environment Management Group (EMG), both under the auspices of UNEP. These efforts have been similarly unsuccessful in terms of providing a more important role for UNEP, however. The USA was also a pusher in establishing the GMEF, but the aim here was not to strengthen UNEP as such, but to gain more control over the UN officials (see Pamela Chasek's article in this volume). Otherwise the USA has been among the main opponents to the work of strengthening UNEP, supported by Australia. Despite Norway's relatively large contributions, the bottom line is that it—like UNEP—is a very small-scale power in world politics. In contrast, the USA has traditionally been more oriented towards the UNEP General Council, and has consequently and successfully blocked any heightened role for UNEP through both GMEF and EMG.

Interestingly, the MFA draws attention to the far more pro-active role that the USA plays in CSD meetings. Here, there is less of a gulf between Norway and the USA. Within the CSD, Washington can be oriented towards moving issues that have already been agreed, rather than initiating further obligations, as is more often the case within UNEP. MFA stresses that in practice there is a functional division of labour between the CSD and UNEP.[24] CSD provides for a more relaxed approach to issues that have sunk deep into the political trenches elsewhere—except, that is, for the climate issue, where the trenches

[23] Ivar Baste is head of the Scientific Assessment Branch Division of Early Warning and Assessment (DEWA), UNEP.

[24] Interview at MFA, 17 February 2006.

remain deep also within the CSD. Interestingly, Norway's approach to the CSD has developed from being characterised by initial internal division (with several officials regarding the CSD as a threat to UNEP), to increasing consensus and pragmatism. When UNCED gave birth to the CSD, Norwegian officials were ambivalent in their reactions. Most would have preferred a more clear-cut division of labour between the CSD and UNEP. As it turned out, both bodies have been given a role in co-ordinating global environmental processes, as the division between the MEAs and Agenda 21 (and related issues from the UNCED arena) is hardly clear-cut. Still, central Norwegian actors have held diverging opinions about the two UN bodies, with some more concerned with UNEP and some more oriented towards the CSD. Very crudely put, the division can be said to go along the traditional 'conservation versus the sustainable development' line:[25] those who focus on more traditional conservation issues favour UNEP, and those more inclined towards development issues favour the CSD. However, this may be too blunt, as a far more accurate picture of the Norwegian approach to environmental issues can be seen in the high level of agreement on the need for sector integration. Hence, what may seem a division could be much more linked to individual affinities and experiences.

How has this 'division' developed over time? Norway's orientation towards the CSD was surely strengthened by the leadership role offered to the then Minister of the Environment, Børge Brende, for a two-year period (2002–2004). On the other hand, there was no decline in Norwegian attention to UNEP during these two years; on the contrary, this coincided with the pressure to strengthen UNEP as a scientific panel. The increased consensus about the CSD may have resulted from the perception of the CSD as a forum in which it is easier to engage the USA on issues of sustainable development, and this would make Norway's MFA more willing to invest in this forum.

At the time of writing, renewed efforts at strengthening UNEP are being made through the proposal to upgrade its normative and authoritative aspects, which Norway supports.[26] The EU is also likely to support this, as is China, which has recently emerged as a firm supporter of UNEP.[27] Uncertainty still attends the final position of several other countries. Brazil and India are split internally, with their MFAs against and their MoEs in favour of the proposal. A similar situation characterises South Africa. The USA, Japan and Russia are in opposition.

Norway's generosity is widely acknowledged and appreciated by UNEP staff. In addition to the financial contributions, UNEP also recognises the value of the moral support provided throughout the history of global environmental governance.[28] As we will examine in greater detail in the next section, UNEP is one of the few UN arenas that has recruited a number of Norwegian officials and civil servants, which further bolsters the close relationship between Norwegian ministries and the organisation. It thus comes as no surprise that UNEP staff tends to give Norway a rather high score on influence, but it

[25] Interview with Norwegian ambassador to Chile, Mona Elisabeth Brøther, November 2002.

[26] "In this process it is important that not only the 'name' is changed, important to also change the content of UNEP. The general Council must give UNEP a new mandate—i.e., a strong and applicable mandate. This implies that UNEP must be strengthened financially." MoE 6 July 2005. See also, Ministry of Foreign Affairs website with news on the report of the UN reform panel. Retrieved November 10, 2006 from http://www.dep.no/ud/

[27] Interestingly, Norwegian respondents claimed that China supported this view, but when we interviewed Chinese decision-makers in January 2006, they did not confirm this, saying any decision has yet to be taken.

[28] Interviews with central actors in several of UNEP's divisions, Nairobi, November 2004.

should also be borne in mind that this assessment may hardly be less biased than those from Norwegian officials themselves.

Norway's efforts of strengthening UNEP on these rather high-profile issues have actually not been very successful, due to powerful opposition from key states. However, there may be other avenues for exerting influence on what takes place in environmental governance. In the two following sections we will look into examples linked to the two potential sources of influence open to Norway: *expertise* and *coalitions*. A small country like Norway would seem to rely to a large extent on coalitions in order to display any kind of influence. It would be an asset to have devoted and powerful allies, and in the following we will look into the scope for coalition-building. Is Norway's clear orientation towards both UNEP and the USA problematic? How is Norway's influence affected by its being outside the European Union? Does Norway still see itself as a bridge-builder to the South, or is there an expanding gulf between Norwegian and G77 positions on environment and development issues? In examining the scope for Norwegian influence, we will concentrate first on the internal capabilities that Norway itself may possess and second, the question of influence through coalition-building.

5 Basis for Norwegian influence

5.1 Influence through continuity and expertise

The MoE points to continuity and competence as sources that may form the basis of direct Norwegian influence, beside the power of funding. The provision of funding can hardly provide Norway with a structurally powerful role, but the power of expertise may lend some clout to leadership. First, there is the formal representation in Nairobi that allows Norwegian officials to keep in touch frequently by telephone, fostering formal as well as informal personal contacts. For instance, the state secretary has been a member of a working group on environmental monitoring and there are former MoE staff working in central positions in UNEP as well as in GEF. MoE has several senior and expert staff placed in Nairobi, with access and prominent roles in relevant discussions. A high-level official from the MoE (Idunn Eidheim) has been elected head of the central UNEP process on capacity-building. At home, stability has characterised the MoE staff, who have developed personal contacts in many negotiation fora and organisations; not least in UNEP and with the UNEP leadership. An interested and involved minister is of great significance in this respect. On a similar note, it has been helpful for relations with UNEP that former Minister of the Environment Thorbjørn Berntsen strongly supported Klaus Töpfer's candidature.[29]

These traits of continuity and expertise are much more characteristic of the MoE than with MFA, where staff tends to have higher turnover and mobility. The MFA sees this as mutually beneficial.[30] Adding a drop of sobriety to the picture of the MoE is the observation that permanence may be a two-edged sword: the downside may be a tendency to go by the calendar, simply ticking off the expected meetings and perhaps stagnating into a less pro-active role.[31] The corollary to this observation is that the MFA is usually just as much on top of the issues as is the MoE, despite its lack of continuity in personnel. Still, the

[29] Klaus Töpfer was Executive Director of UNEP from 1998 to 2006, when Achim Steiner replaced him.

[30] Interview with two senior civil servants at MFA, 17 February 2006.

[31] Interview at FORUM, 25 November 2005.

general contribution of expertise and continuity as assets to the Norwegian position remains, not least as continuity may also add to the cognitive asset. And these are precisely the sort of factors that may strengthen an intellectual leadership role. According to officials, FORUM also adds to this by providing information to enable practical solutions. In the next section we will look further into examples of how Norway has promoted specific policies through UNEP.

A further aspect of continuity is apparent in the consensus typical of Norwegian foreign environmental policy. Continued consensus is apparent both in the high level of funding and in the exceptionally high level of public support for the UN among the Norwegian public. These aspects can also be seen as strengthening the leadership role of Norway in general.

Several hurdles exist, however, as far as direct influence from the MoE is concerned. Most important of these is the trend in global environmental foci, from environment in Stockholm (1972), sustainable development in Rio (1992) towards poverty and social issues in Johannesburg (2002). It has been held that the development agenda has been central in environmental issues all the way from Stockholm and then in the World Commission on Sustainable Development (WCSD 1987). The argument is that the North–South conflict over environmental and developmental issues has persisted over the years and that each negotiated multilateral environmental agreement has provided a venue for discussing New International Economic Order issues (Selin and Linnér 2005). Adil Najam (2005) finds an increased acceptance of the concerns of developing countries in global environmental governance. Others maintain that the development cloak of Johannesburg was more of a strategic move on the part of European countries, aimed at honeying the developing countries into implementing environmental obligations.[32] However, as seen from the perspective of UNEP, the development agenda is potentially encroaching on their turf. It is seen as a real threat that the economic aspects of development issues may cause environmental damage (Rosendal and Andresen 2003). Also the MoE perceives the link to development as vital, but they concur that it may lead to increasing neglect of environment concerns—as was seen in the elaboration of the Millennium Development Goals. In turn, this may contribute to strengthen the MFA in the Norwegian decision-making game, as the MFA is the responsible actor for development issues.

5.2 Influence through alliances

Coalition-building—the power of alliances—provides the other main source of Norwegian influence. Here we will look into three main clusters of potential coalition partners and add some words on other groups. First, the Nordic co-ordination meetings are central to Norwegian influence, and both MFA and MoE are represented here. These are annual board meetings, including working groups that discuss UNEP, GEF and CSD as well as global environmental problems such as biodiversity and chemicals. The Nordic co-ordination meetings lend strength to Norway's position in UNEP.[33] The other Nordic countries have continued these meetings despite their EU membership—one important reason being that some EU countries feel that Norway can more effectively push certain issues. This goes for Sweden and Finland in particular, although no longer Denmark.

[32] Interview at MoE, 27 September 2002.

[33] Interview at MFA, 17 February 2006. Reiterated MoE: "They know us and do not go directly against us. This is reciprocal; we are not very critical of UNEP either."

Opinions diverge greatly on whether its independence as a non-EU member helps or hampers Norway's global environmental efforts. An example of the former concerns the language on hierarchy between the WTO and MEA in Johannesburg. With the aid of Ethiopia and Switzerland, Norway managed to avoid subordination of MEAs to WTO regulations. It was speculated that several dominant EU members had quietly hoped to shut their eyes to the issue, so as to keep their agricultural subsidies untouched within the WTO. Senior advisor Jan Peter Borring of the Norwegian MoE had a central role in raising the issue; he informed Tewolde Egziabher of Ethiopia about the way in which the motion was formulated, and the latter immediately tabled a motion against it. Now the EU could not go against it—the implications were too obvious. On the other hand, it must be admitted that Norway is not always an environmental spearhead compared to the EU. If we take into account the NGO view of Norway's coalition-building, the verdict is that Norway could and should make far better use of this potential.[34]

There are also examples of issues where there is an acknowledged willingness within the EU to lend support, but where they would not want to table a proposal themselves. This is seen as a considerable strength for Norway and can in a sense make the EU a second potential coalition partner. One example from Johannesburg was the combined, prolonged and eventually unsuccessful efforts of the EU and Norway to get the 'precautionary approach' of the Rio Declaration changed to a more active 'precautionary principle'. The USA and Japan, however, vetoed the concept (Gulbrandsen 2003). Another case is the Bali Plan, which was adopted by the Governing Council in 2005 and which strengthens the role of UNEP in capacity-building in developing countries. Essential in the Bali Plan is the emphasis on expertise about local conditions, especially the biological, technological, social and economic aspects. It places UNEP as the central knowledge-broker at country level, closer to implementation than has been the norm for this body.

The EU supported this way of strengthening a core function of UNEP after being pressured by Norway. Also the USA has supported the Bali Plan as a means of strengthening the executive—rather than the normative and political—side of UNEP. As the Bali Plan has the controversial potential of expanding UNEP into traditionally UNDP turf, it goes to the core of the environment and development discourse.

Other cases in point are the recent additional agreements within the chemicals cluster under UNEP. The Global Mercury Assessment was concluded in 2003 and the 'Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management' was concluded in Dubai in February 2006. Both chemicals initiatives were forcefully promoted first by Switzerland and Norway and then supported by the EU. The EU, unlike the USA, has agreed with Norway on the objective of strengthening the initiation of MEA as a core activity of UNEP. As we have noted, this discrepancy over UN global environmental governance issues is more pronounced in UNEP than in the CSD.

The downside of Norway's non-membership in the EU can be appreciated when we consider the preparatory meetings that usually start the day in international negotiations. In the early hours, most countries will teem up with some larger group to get the highlights and mull over the scope for entering into this or that coalition. As one of the increasingly few European countries outside the EU, Norway is usually stuck with the JUSCANNZ group in global environmental negotiations. JUSCANNZ basically consists of OECD countries that are not part of the EU: Japan, the USA, Switzerland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand—and Norway. There is undoubtedly less scope for alliances through JUSCANNZ compared to the EU group, but these meetings are nevertheless useful for information

[34] Interview, FORUM, 25 November 2005.

purposes. Of the JUSCANNZ countries, Switzerland is the closest ally; in earlier phases, so was Canada (Kaasa 2005). The Norwegian-Swiss initiative which launched the Mercury Assessment is a case in point. The USA and Japan seldom act as central allies with Norway on these issues—an exception being Norway and Japan allying in the Sustainable Use Group in CITES in favour of whaling. Norway and the USA take very different stances on issues regarding the organisation of UNEP, and understandably so. As noted previously, as a small country, Norway tends to prefer the multilateral system and is wary of bilateralism. For instance, Norway is not very supportive of the ideas about partnerships that the USA successfully pushed in Johannesburg. On a comparative note, it should be recognised that most of the time the EU countries have not succeeded in aligning themselves into a powerful coalition through these gatherings, either. This seems to be changing, however, as the EU is becoming more coherent on global environmental issues (see Vogler and Stephan, this volume). Whether Norway could have accomplished more within the EU group than in JUSCANNZ in these and similar meetings must remain a hypothetical question.

A third potential and actual coalition partner for Norway is the G77. This coalition has a firm basis in the bridge-builder role of Norway, strengthened by Norway's non-colonial past. An additional boost may come from the strengthened development agenda in environmental issues. In practice, alliances with the G77 have varied from case to case and have relied to a large extent on personal relations. South Africa and Ethiopia are central examples of this, whereas China and Indonesia have been more inclined to change their staff and personnel. Norway's support for the multilateral system, added to the large percentage of Norwegian development aid, provides for a good standing with the G77 countries. Norway will typically support the G77 in advocating new and additional funding for environmental and development issues, for instance within the CSD (Kaasa 2005, p. 32). On the other hand, the G77 countries have differing interests in different international fora, so the notion of the G77 as a coherent ally is not quite apt. Still, on issues like biodiversity the G77 coalition has been able to develop a firm common position (Najam 2005), often greatly supported by Norway. The increased emphasis on a combined agenda for environmental and developmental issues is likely to make bridge-building even more palatable to Norway, where there are firm traditions in both areas. This is not to say it will be an easy job, however, as implementation of these goals will often reveal a lack of win–win situations in the short term.

On a similar note it may be speculated that Norway went along with other European states in what has been dubbed a 'strategic development wrapping' of the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). This is bolstered by another argument: that Norway, prior to WSSD, had to choose between being a pusher for the environment or being a bridge-builder between the environment and development; and that it opted for the former.[35] This could challenge the notion of the bridge-builder role of Norway and might lead to scepticism from the G77 that Norway is 'buying' environmental policy in the South. Similar cost-efficiency arguments are basic to Norway's engagement through the Clean Development Mechanism of the UNFCCC. On the other hand, Johannesburg did improve the understanding of the linkage between the environment and poverty. This linkage is central to Norway's environmental and developmental foreign policy, which might restore the credibility of the country's bridge-builder role.

Summing up, UNEP is extremely important to Norwegian foreign environmental policy. It could be speculated that Norway has a strategic interest in focusing resources internationally, on bodies like UNEP. This can keep Norway's environmental policies

[35] Interview at MFA, 25 September 2002.

comfortably focused on the formation of policy goals and restricted to activities that do not demand too much domestic implementation. There have been many cases where Norway has played a part in initiating multilateral environmental agreements and identifying and tabling new environmental issues in need of concerted global action. That Norway is able to do this is due partly to its investments in expertise and personnel with long-term experience in environmental issues. These are clearly important factors in performing the entrepreneurial and intellectual leadership roles—and such roles are performed even better when Norway from time to time succeeds in coalition-building with like-minded countries.

6 Conclusion

While Norway's ambitions are quite easily mapped, there are several methodological problems involved in judging the country's actual influence in global environmental governance. First, as noted in the introduction, there is the inherent bias among interviewees closely engaged in the issues in question. Second, there are problems in terms of how to gauge and compare influence. It is certainly much easier to win through with a position of spending less resources and efforts, than with costly and ambitious goals like those pursued by Norway. Gaining influence would also seem easier for an economic and technological superpower, compared to a small country like Norway. Our assessments of Norwegian influence must take these factors into consideration.

Environmental issues typically confer specific costs and general benefits (Wilson 1973) also on the international arena. In turn, it is hard to imagine stakeholders with strong interests in pushing environmental issues. Still, there are a few countries that do take on this role, whether in order to elevate their own profile in international fora or for more altruistic reasons. Like Norway, these are typically small countries with few other outlets for influence and with a general interest in strengthening multilateral fora. Our main questions here were whether this type of activity could be successful, and, if so, by what means. We assumed that such influence would be most evident in the initiation phase and that the scope for success would narrow down as implementation proceeded.

On the whole, it is clear that Norway has not been particularly successful in its general efforts at strengthening UNEP. These proposals have failed, due mainly to opposition from key states. This should not come as a great surprise. Norway is after all a minor player in global governance issues, even in those pertaining to the environment.

Nevertheless, we have seen that Norway persists with a high environmental profile during the agenda-setting phase and the initiation of multilateral environmental agreements. We found three main factors that help to explain why Norway has a relatively high level of influence at the international environmental arena compared to its size. First, there is a relatively straightforward domestic decision-making process with little conflict. There has also been continued political agreement on providing a relatively high level of funding for this type of international engagement. Norway's foreign environmental policy is characterised by consensus among the central ministries as well as with NGOs. This would seem to provide a good basis for influence, although by no means a sufficient one. Second, Norwegian officials and NGOs possess considerable expertise in these issues. To some extent they are also helped by a high level of continuity, although this latter aspect may pull in both directions as far as a pro-active environmental profile is concerned. These factors add to the intellectual leadership role, and we have noted several examples where

Norway has been in the forefront in pushing for new principles and international legislation through UNEP. Our research indicates that Norway, at least to some extent, did act as instrumental leader until the Rio Summit, but less so thereafter. Third, Norway is sometimes, but not always, able to join forces in environmental alliances with other like-minded countries. Most respondents are positive with regard to Norway's role in uniting environmental proponents, although NGOs still wish that Norway would make greater use of its 'unique' position.

And what is this unique position? The explanation of why Norway has invested in this particular agenda in the first place is somewhat complex. First, environmental politics may be one of the few arenas where small countries can enjoy a certain amount of influence in global politics. Second, and related to this, its history as a non-colonial power has granted Norway a potential role to play as a bridge-builder to developing countries. Third, Norway is generously endowed as a rather untouched and yet highly affluent country with a low population density. At first glance at least, environmental politics would not seem to involve too high costs for this particular country.

These explanations may change as the environment is gradually losing out to development and economic concerns. Norway has continued to emphasise UNEP both in terms of finance and political attention. However, UNEP remains a lightweight in the UN family, even with a view to the environmental arena as the orientation shifts increasingly towards sustainable development, and hence to other bodies such as UNDP and the CSD. Against this backdrop, it might seem that Norway is unwisely putting all its eggs in one basket—and a potential loser of a basket at that. On the other hand, the persisting focus on UNEP may be rational for two reasons: First, it may be sensible to focus resources, in personnel and budgetary terms, rather than spreading them too thin. This view is supported by the fact that Norway has been equally unsuccessful in its efforts to advocate new and additional funding through other fora, such as the CSD (Kaasa 2005, p. 32). Second, it may add positively to the difficult balance between the environment and development that some actors maintain the push for environmental concerns.

Finally, we ask whether there have been significant changes in Norway's foreign environmental policies. We found no decline in the efforts to support and strengthen UNEP, although those efforts have not been rewarded. Norway has been more successful in efforts that only indirectly strengthen UNEP, such as supporting UNEP in initiating new MEAs. There are no indications that Norway has been toning down these efforts, and success has largely been linked to Norway's ability to muster support through environmental coalitions. The robustness of this course will depend on the will and interest of the EU and G77 to develop a more independent role in global environmental governance, rather than waiting for US leadership. It will also be important for Norway to be able to maintain continuity in environmental expertise. A small country cannot be expected to have a high degree of global influence, but it is safe to conclude that Norway has managed to accomplish more on the global environmental arena than its financial and population size alone would predict.

Acknowledgements The project has been supported by the Norwegian Research Council (NRC project number: ES417969). Thanks to Steinar Andresen, Marc Levy and Peter Johan Schei, as well as anonymous reviewers for valuable contributions and comments during the process of preparing this article. Thanks also to the participants in panel key actors in global environmental governance, ISA 47th Conference, 2006, for helpful input and to Susan Høivik for language editing. Any remaining errors are the sole responsibility of the authors.

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