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**United Nations
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**United Nations Environment Assembly of the
United Nations Environment Programme
Fifth session**

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Item 5 of the provisional agenda**

**International environmental policy and
governance issues**

**Information on implementation of resolution 2/21 on sand and
dust storms*****

Note by the Executive Director

Introduction

1. The present report was prepared pursuant to resolution 2/21 on sand and dust storms adopted in May 2016, in which the United Nations Environment Assembly, among other things, requested the Executive Director to, within the programme of work and available resources, support member States, in collaboration with relevant United Nations entities and other partners, in addressing the challenges of sand and dust storms through the identification of relevant data and information gaps, policy measures and action, and also requested the Executive Director to report on progress in the implementation of the resolution to the United Nations Environment Assembly. Since then, the United Nations Environment Programme, in collaboration with relevant United Nations entities and other partners, has implemented a number of activities and further strengthened partnerships with other United Nations entities in addressing the challenges of sand and dust storms.
2. The present report provides an update on progress made since the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, held in March 2019, in the implementation of that resolution.

I. Progress in the implementation of resolution 2/21

3. The United Nations Environment Programme implemented the following activities on sand and dust storm mitigation pursuant to resolution 2/21, since March 2019:

(a) The UN Environment Programme coordinated, compiled and edited inputs for the Secretary General's report on the implementation of the General Assembly Resolution on combating sand and dust storms (GA Resolution 73/237 for consideration of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. Inputs to this 2019 report were received from within the UN Environment

* In accordance with the decisions taken at the meeting of the Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly held on 8 October 2020 and at the joint meeting of the Bureaux of the United Nations Environment Assembly and the Committee of Permanent Representatives held on 1 December 2020, the fifth session of the Assembly is expected to adjourn on 23 February 2021 and resume as an in-person meeting in February 2022.

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*** The present document is being issued without formal editing.

Programme (UNEP), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). Similarly, UNEP coordinated, compiled and edited inputs for the Secretary General's report on the implementation of the General Assembly Resolution on combating sand and dust storms (GA Resolution 74/226 for consideration of the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session in September 2020. Inputs to this 2020 report were received from within the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and its Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management (APDIM), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR).

(b) The UN Environment Programme launched, together with other UN agencies and the Environment Management Group, the inter-agency UN Coalition on Sand and Dust Storms, with the aim of enhancing cooperation and coordination on the sand and dust storms agenda, the purpose being to ensure a more coherent and consistent approach to tackling sand and dust storm issues at the global, regional and national levels. The Coalition was officially launched during 14th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD/COP14) in September 2019 in Delhi, India. The launch took place as part of a Sand and Dust Storm Day on 7 September 2019 in cooperation with UNCCD. In July 2020, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) took over the leadership and hosting of the UN Coalition on Sand and Dust Storms from UNEP.

(c) Several international meetings on sand and dust storms were supported, including the 3rd International SDS Aerosol Workshop and the 5th SDS-WAS (SDS Warning Advisory and Assessment System) Global Steering Committee meeting organised by WMO in November 2019 in Hangzhou, China; and the Sand and Dust Storms Toolbox Workshop organised by UNCCD in February 2020 at UN-Campus, Bonn, Germany.

(d) The UN Environment Programme held a scoping meeting in Geneva in April 2019 and identified activities for a UN Environment Programme workplan on sand and dust storms.

(e) The UN Environment Programme published in late 2020 a scientific assessment report on the impacts of sand and dust storms on oceans. The report provides science for policy making on dust storm sources, transport pathways and deposition, and effects on biodiversity and climate. It also provides a set of policy implications and response options. The report is supported by (i) the independent Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP) and (ii) the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA). It is a contribution to the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

II. Recommendations and suggested action

4. The United Nations Environment Programme continues its work to address the challenges of sand and dust storms, through the identification of relevant data and information gaps, policy measures and action, and to continue to engage with all relevant United Nations entities to promote a coordinated approach to combating sand and dust storms globally, including through the following activities:

(a) In consultation with other relevant United Nations entities and other partners, and particularly through the UN Coalition designed to enhance cooperation and coordination on the sand and dust storms agenda, prepare a strategy for guiding the activities of the UN Environment Programme to mitigate sand and dust storms and their impacts;

(b) Implement activities on sand and dust storm mitigation towards achieving the 2030 outcome of the UN Environment Programme medium-term strategy for the period 2018–2021 on chemicals, waste and air quality, namely, improvement of air quality leading to reduced negative impacts from air pollutants on environmental and human health, especially in relation to the following indicators: reduced loads of sand and desert storm aerosols in ambient air and reduced number of deaths due to human exposure to outdoor air pollution levels above the World Health Organization air quality guideline values.

5. Resources to implement resolution 2/21 have been very limited to date and additional core and extrabudgetary resources are required to further develop activities on sand and dust storm mitigation.

6. The Assembly may wish to encourage member States and stakeholders to increase their engagement and support, including financial resources, to mitigate anthropogenic sources of sand and dust storms and to protect human health, infrastructure and other valuable assets from the damaging effects thereof;

(a) To urge member States and the Environment Programme to bring to wider public attention the damaging effects of sand and dust storms and cost-effective options for source and impact mitigation;

(b) To encourage member States to develop national plans to combat sand and dust storms and to collaborate at the regional and sub regional levels for collective action to combat cross-border transport of sand and dust.
