

For People and Planet

The United Nations Environment Programme strategy for tackling climate change, biodiversity and nature loss, and pollution and waste from 2022–2025.



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programme

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Medium-Term Strategy 2022–2025

The United Nations Environment Programme strategy for tackling climate change, biodiversity and nature loss, and pollution and waste from 2022–2025.

Foreword



For 50 years, UNEP has scanned the horizons for environmental change, linked science to policy and decision making, coordinated responses to global environmental challenges, and supported countries in delivering on their environmental mandates. Today, in an era of unprecedented challenges, UNEP's mandate is more important than ever. As noted by the United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, "making peace with nature" is the priority for people everywhere. Curbing decades of unsustainable consumption and production that are chipping away at the Earth's foundations, putting at risk our future on this planet, will be central to overcoming this challenge.

Guided by the latest science, UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy for 2022–2025 seeks to deliver a transformational change for people and nature. And it does so by drilling down on the root causes of the three planetary crises of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste. Our aim is to propose solutions in line with a sustainable and just post-COVID-19 recovery.

I am very proud to note that this strategy is the result of extensive consultations between UNEP and Member States, stakeholders and partners, including civil society and youth groups, faith-based organizations and the private sector. This engagement has shaped UNEP's contribution to the 2030 Agenda, but with a 2050 outlook on planetary sustainability for people, prosperity and equity.

To accelerate global efforts to deliver the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals in this critical Decade of Action, UNEP's strategy is geared towards building a United Nations system that is stronger, more coordinated and mutually supportive of environmental action. In line with its mandate, UNEP will seize the opportunities provided by the Decade of Action and demonstrate that a networked and inclusive multilateralism is fundamental to discovering and implementing lasting solutions to global challenges.

Nothing short of a transformation is required to address the triple planetary crisis and make peace with nature. It is my hope that UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy for 2022–2025 will serve as a vehicle for a transformation that inspires each and every one of us, everywhere and every day, to raise ambition and voice, and catalyze environmental action for people and planet.

Inger Andersen
United Nations Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director

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Abbreviations

10YFP	10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
IRP	International Resource Panel
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
Rio+20	United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development
SCBD	Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UN-REDD	United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries
UN-Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WHO	World Health Organization

Summary



Supporting the Sustainable Development Goals.
Photo: UN Photo

For people and planet

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) strategy for tackling climate change, biodiversity and nature loss, and pollution and waste from 2022–2025.

1. In its decision 4/1, the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) requested the Executive Director of UNEP to submit for consideration and approval by the Environment Assembly at its fifth session, in consultation with the Committee of Permanent Representatives, and building on lessons learned from previous bienniums, a results-oriented and streamlined Medium-Term Strategy and programme of work in line with General Assembly resolution 72/266.
2. UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy for 2022–2025, and the programme and work and budget for 2022–2023, focus on responding to three planetary crises - climate change, biodiversity and nature loss, pollution and waste. Tackling these challenges to achieve climate stability, living in harmony with nature and moving towards a pollution-free planet will require a recalibration of our economies and societies towards more sustainable and equitable models. The Medium-Term Strategy outlines a set of transformative shifts that target the drivers of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, and looks at their impact. It maps out the actions needed to reshape our consumption and production patterns towards sustainability, framing UNEP's contribution in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Decade of Action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals and beyond. It does so while respecting synergies with the Multilateral Environmental Agreements and in line with their relevant objectives, goals and principles, without prejudice to the outcome of future negotiations. The Medium-Term Strategy will also guide the support provided by UNEP in a manner consistent with other internationally agreed frameworks. It will leverage the United Nations development system reform to engage the wider United Nations system in stronger, more coordinated and mutually supportive environmental action. The programme of work (UNEP/EA.5/3/Add.1) sets out the UNEP's results framework for the biennium 2022–2023, focused on the three strategic objectives outlined in the Medium-Term Strategy.
3. Member States reviewed the road map for the preparation of the Medium-Term Strategy and programme of work at the sixth meeting of the annual subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, held in October 2019. The streams of consultation for the preparation of the Medium-Term Strategy and programme of work and budget for 2022–2023 were:
 - a. sessions with the Committee of Permanent Representatives;
 - b. discovery sessions with Member States;
 - c. UNEP internal discovery processes, including as part of the transformation process;
 - d. consultations on priorities with strategic partners, including other United Nations entities;
 - e. discovery sessions with Multilateral Environmental Agreement secretariats; and
 - f. discovery sessions with major groups and stakeholders, including children and youth and faith-based organizations, and with the private sector.
4. The Medium-Term Strategy for 2022–2025 and the programme of work and budget for 2022–2023 build on consultations held with the Committee of Permanent Representatives on 10 December 2019 (on lessons learned), and on 4 June 2020 (on the outcome of the Committee's "discovery sessions"), 14 July, 14 September, 12–16 October (during the seventh meeting of the annual subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives), 19 November and 10 December 2020.

Background

Cleaning solar panels in Gujarat, India.
Photo: Reuters/A. Dave



“With only 10 years left before the 2030 deadline, there is an urgent need to step up action. And every nation, every community and every person can and must make a contribution.”

– Secretary-General António Guterres

1. UNEP was established in 1972 against the backdrop of a series of scientific reports that notified the world that the state of the global environment was in crisis. The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Conference) provided a science-centred platform for world leaders and policymakers to converge and tackle the drivers of that crisis. As a result, UNEP was tasked with coordinating global responses to environmental challenges and related emerging issues, within and outside the United Nations, while keeping watch over the state of the world’s environment and linking science to policymaking.

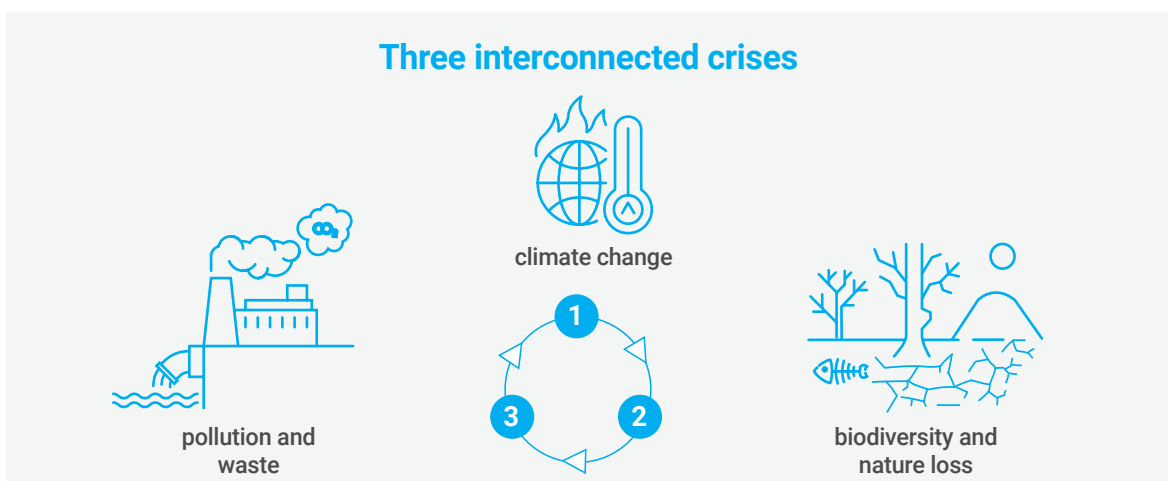
2. Today, the world finds itself in a similar situation, but the state of the environment has only worsened. Three interconnected crises—climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution—are putting our economic and social well-being at risk, while undermining opportunities to reduce poverty, and improve lives and livelihoods, as demonstrated by the COVID-19 crisis. Furthermore, they also risk irreversibly changing our relationship with the natural world. These crises are primarily linked to unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, which were recognized at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit) in 1992 as “the major cause of the continued deterioration of the global environment” (UNCED, 1992). While the

effects of these drivers of environmental deterioration have been evident for decades (UNEP, 2019d), the scale and pace of the global response to these three crises is failing to reverse or even slow down. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was put in place to boost the collective sense of urgency and accelerate cooperation, but today we are not on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, especially the environment-related ones, which are central to achieving all the goals.¹

3. While the importance of linking science to policy and decision making remains stronger than ever, science alone is not enough. Science underpins solutions and actions that can chart a transformational path for the way we live, work and relate to nature. Yet only when sustained by strong environmental governance and supported by enabling macroeconomic policies can science help catalyze a response to the crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution – a response required to improve well-being, in general, and the lives of the poor and the vulnerable in particular. Science can and must inform and drive financial, economic and behavioral shifts towards sustainable consumption and production patterns to enable transformation at the pace and scale required. Unless we harness the digital revolution as a strategic asset for more inclusive, transparent and innovative outcomes, we will fall short of the urgent responses we need.

4. This strategy sets out a vision of how UNEP can meet current and future expectations while continuing to deliver on the promises made to Member States in 2012 through the United Nations

¹ The report *Measuring Progress: Towards Achieving the Environmental Dimension of the SDGs* (UNEP, 2019d) revealed that, of the 93 environment-related Sustainable Development Goal indicators, there are 22 (23 per cent) for which good progress has been made on 22 (23 per cent) over the last 15 years. However, for the other 77 per cent of the environment-related indicators, either there is not enough data to assess progress (68 per cent) or it is unlikely that the target will be met without upscaling action (9 per cent).





Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and its outcome document, *The Future We Want* (A/RES/66/288). The strategy proposes a trajectory for UNEP for 2022–2025, with strengthening the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda as its road map and a forward-looking 2050 perspective for planetary sustainability. It speaks to the central role of UNEP in supporting countries' work to build their capacity to deliver on their environmental goals and commitments under international agreements.

5. Through this strategy, UNEP places the three environmental crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution at the heart of its work.

UNEP will tackle these crises through transformative multi-stakeholder actions that target the root causes and drivers of the crises, delivering deeper and broader impact that can underpin positive social and economic outcomes, while reducing vulnerabilities to support of sustainable development. UNEP will ensure that science remains at the centre of all decision making processes, including on emerging issues, and that environmental rule of law continues to improve global environmental governance, in close cooperation with the Multilateral Environmental Agreements and in the direction set by the 2030 Agenda. UNEP will also collaborate with its many partners, accelerating systemic interventions that engage financial and economic actors, while leveraging the power of digital technologies to scale up environmental sustainability.

6. This four-year strategy illuminates a path through the first half of the Decade of Action so that UNEP can strengthen the collective United Nations response to the crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

The United Nations development system reform presents a tremendous opportunity to empower the United Nations to address global environmental and socioeconomic crises. UNEP will leverage this opportunity to enhance its guiding role, raise ambition and accelerate and scale up progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, in the spirit of the Secretary-General's Decade of Action.

7. These tenets lie at the heart of the UNEP Medium-Term Strategy for 2022–2025.

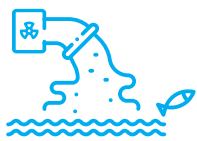
Sorting plastic and marine litter at EcoWorld Watamu, in Kenya. Photo: UNEP/ F. Fusstetter



Situational analysis:
unsustainable patterns of
consumption and production
are overburdening the planet's
resources

Scientists investigate rice production problems in Colombia.
Photo: CIAT / N. Palmer

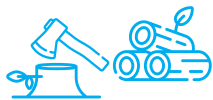
A rapidly deteriorating environment threatens not only our social and economic well-being but also the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals



Up to **400 million** tons of heavy metals, solvents, toxic sludge and other industrial wastes are released annually into the world's waters

IPBES, 2019

8. Expanding human activity and increasingly unsustainable patterns of consumption and production are testing Earth's environment. In the past 50 years, the global human population has doubled, the extraction of materials has tripled, primary energy production has more than tripled, the economy has grown nearly fivefold and global trade has grown tenfold (UNEP, 2019c). Yet, over 820 million people still suffer from hunger (FAO and others, 2019). Human consumption is set to increase further as population, urbanization and per capita income continue to grow. Per capita consumption in developed countries generally far exceeds that in developing countries. Land, freshwater bodies and oceans are being overexploited for food production, infrastructure, industry and human settlements. Up to 400 million tons of heavy metals, solvents, toxic sludge and other industrial wastes are released annually into the world's waters (IPBES, 2019).



Land, freshwater bodies and the oceans are being **overexploited** for food production, infrastructure, industry and human settlements

9. The accumulating pollution from chemicals and waste and the changing climate, biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation, desertification, land degradation and drought are closely related and are reinforcing each other.

Global chemical production capacity almost doubled between 2000 and 2017 (UNEP, 2019b). Fertilizers used in agriculture entering coastal ecosystems have produced more than 400 ocean "dead zones" totalling more than 245,000 km² – a combined area greater than that of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Diaz and Rosenberg, 2008). Marine plastics pollution has increased tenfold since 1980 (UNEP, 2019b; 2019c). Of 45 megacities with available observations, only four attained the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines for air quality (Cheng and others, 2016). Climate change, chemicals, waste, pollution and unsustainable use of land, water and oceans can individually or in combination lead to degradation of ecosystems and their

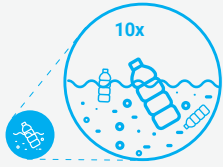


Fertilizers used in agriculture entering coastal ecosystems have produced more than **400 ocean "dead zones"** totalling more than **245,000 km²**

ability to provide services that are crucial for the well-being of humans and nature (FAO and others, 2019; IPBES, 2019; IPCC, 2019; IRP, 2019a; UNEP, 2019b; 2019c).

10. As the environment changes, the risk of crossing thresholds that upset critical socioecological systems increases, leading to threats such as new pandemics and sudden changes to food supply (IPBES, 2019; IPCC, 2019; IRP, 2019a; UNEP, 2019a). Trends and scenarios project clear progress over time in reducing hunger, increasing access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation, and increasing access to modern energy services, but not enough to meet the related Sustainable Development Goal targets by 2030 (IPBES, 2019; IPCC, 2019; UNEP, 2019c). For example, in 2018, damage from climate-related disasters cost an estimated US\$155 billion (UNEP, 2019c). Global economic losses due to decreased labour productivity, increased health care costs and lower crop yields could amount to 1 per cent of global gross domestic product (GDP) by 2060 (OECD, 2016). Any further progression of climate change increases the risks, specifically those relating to poverty and hunger, health and well-being and access to clean freshwater (UNEP, 2019c). Poor water quality has many associated economic costs, including those related to degradation of ecosystem services; water treatment and health; impacts on economic activities such as agriculture, fisheries, industrial manufacturing and tourism; and lost property value and opportunities for further development. Furthermore, current negative trends in biodiversity and ecosystem integrity undermine progress towards Sustainable Development Goal targets related to poverty, hunger, health, water, climate and cities (IPBES, 2019; UNEP, 2019c). For example, animal pollination is critical to more than 75 per cent of food crops, including many fruits and vegetables and important cash crops of developing countries, such as coffee, cocoa and almonds (IPBES, 2019). Loss of pollinators threatens an annual global commercial crop output of between US\$235 billion and US\$577 billion (IPBES, 2019).

11. The trajectory of global environmental change is out of line with international goals and objectives. The global community is failing to meet internationally agreed environmental goals. Earth's mean surface temperature has already warmed by about



Marine plastics pollution has increased tenfold since 1980

UNEP, 2019c; 2019d



Of **45 megacities** with available observations, only four attained the World Health Organization guidelines for air quality

Cheng and others, 2016



Loss of pollinators threatens an annual global commercial crop output of between

US\$235-US\$577 billion

IPBES, 2019



At the current rate of greenhouse gas emissions, warming is likely to reach 1.5°C in the early 2030s

(IPCC, 2018)

1°C above pre-industrial levels. At the current rate of greenhouse gas emissions, warming is likely to reach 1.5°C in the early 2030s. With current pledges, the world is on a path to warming of 3°C to 4°C or even more, and even keeping warming to that level requires that current pledges be met (IPCC, 2018). A changing climate means stresses on land and freshwater resources, adding to existing risks to livelihoods, biodiversity, human and ecosystem health, infrastructure and food systems (IPCC, 2019). One million of the world's estimated 8 million species of plants and animals, including insects, are threatened with extinction (IPBES, 2019).

12. Addressing environmental degradation requires an integrated focus on climate, biodiversity, chemicals and waste, natural resources and pollution. It is still technically possible to limit the global mean temperature increase to well below 1.5°C if all countries take immediate and more ambitious action to reduce emissions of all greenhouse gases. Such ambitious actions will require capacity building and adequate financial and technological support. A sound assessment of the potential benefits and risks is fundamental for further political action. The more efficiently we use natural resources, the lower the greenhouse gases emitted across the entire economy (IRP, 2019a; 2019b). Biodiversity can only be conserved, sustainably used and restored by addressing all the underlying drivers of change, including the economic factors driving the exploitation and destruction of critical habitats. The adverse effects of chemicals and waste pollution on the environment and human health can be substantially reduced by implementing the existing international frameworks, strengthening the scientific basis of policy and decision making, and fostering sustainable, resource-efficient innovations and capacity through which harmful chemicals are contained and their use reduced and phased out.

Negative impacts on human development, increasing inequality and challenges to the multilateral order risk diverting attention from the environmental dimensions of sustainable development

13. The global macroeconomic outlook has worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic, accelerating the growth of inequality across the world and threatening to wipe out significant progress on sustainable development. In June 2020, the International Monetary Fund projected global growth of -4.9 per cent in 2020 and predicted “a particularly acute negative impact of the pandemic on low-income households worldwide that could significantly raise inequality” (IMF, 2020). The United Nations Development Programme warned that global human development is set to decline in 2020 for the first time in 20 years (UNDP, 2020). Building back better requires better measurement and management of the assets that underpin human, environmental, institutional and economic progress.

14. Not only are increasing socioeconomic inequality and inequity deepening divisions between the “haves” and the “have-nots,” but there is also greater concern about losing the gains made in recent decades in relation to reducing poverty. Even before the onset of COVID-19, it was estimated that inequality had been steadily increasing for more than 70 per cent of the global population (United Nations, 2020d), exacerbating divisions between and within countries. Mega-trends and global forces such as technological innovation,



A man tries to chase a swarm of locusts devastating ricefields in Manila, Philippines. Photo: Reuters / R. Ranoco

urbanization and migration, in addition to climate change, environmental degradation and resource depletion, reinforce each other to exacerbate such inequality while undermining prospects for development generally. Current modes of production and consumption and the associated levels of inequality threaten the achievement of the entire 2030 Agenda (Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the Secretary-General, 2019).

15. Poor people, women and children face increased vulnerability from environmental stresses that lead to intensified competition for scarce natural resources and potentially to migration, instability and conflict. Globally, 24 per cent of land is degrading. More than 1.5 billion people, 74 per cent of whom live in poverty, depend directly on that land (Sena, 2019). By 2050, over 143 million people in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America – comprising 2.8 per cent of the population of these regions – will have become internal migrants. A major cause of that will be the various climatic impacts, with people leaving less viable areas with higher water scarcity and lower crop productivity, as well as areas affected by rising sea levels and storm surges (Rigaud and others, 2018).

16. Establishing more sustainable consumption and production patterns at the local, national, regional and global levels, supported by a framework anchored in the United Nations, is key to reducing inequality, creating jobs and protecting the environment. Resource extraction and processing create more than 50 per cent of

global climate change impacts and more than 90 per cent of global biodiversity loss (IRP, 2019a). Yet the two indicators of resource consumption, “material footprint” and “domestic material consumption,” shared by Sustainable Development Goal targets 12.2 and 8.4, both show a negative long-term trend continuing to rise at the global level (Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the Secretary-General, 2019; UNEP, 2019d). This indicates that the rate at which materials are being extracted globally is outpacing both population and economic growth (Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the Secretary-General, 2019). Reversing this trend requires transforming how we produce, process, use and manage natural resources in our socioeconomic systems and how we design and implement our national fiscal and economic policies. On the jobs side, the International Labour Organization has reported that “a shift to a greener economy could create 24 million new jobs globally by 2030 if the right policies are put in place” (ILO, 2018). Prioritizing resource-intensive sectors for a shift to sustainable consumption and production could achieve very significant economic, social and environmental gains, often in short time frames. For example, the agriculture, food and beverage, and building and construction sectors accounted for nearly 70 per cent of the world’s total material footprint in 2015, while being among the most intensive greenhouse-gas-emitting sectors (Life Cycle Initiative and others, 2018). Transforming those sectors to reduce emissions and increase circularity will be crucial in the years to come.



In Mangatsiotra village, Madagascar, women weave and sell mats made of a local reed called Rambo. UNEP is working with farmers to cultivate rambo, a climate-resilient crop, which can withstand erratic rainfall and secures a more stable income. Photo: UNEP

17. Gender equality and a rights-based approach are key to ending all forms of discrimination and ensuring progress towards environmental sustainability (World Economic Forum, 2019).

Climate change and the population crisis are not gender neutral; a high and uneven burden is carried by women, who constitute 80 per cent of those displaced by climate change (Habtezion, 2016). Women of child-bearing age and children are especially vulnerable. Women are responsible for 60–80 per cent of food production in developing countries (SIDA, 2009); however, women are often excluded from land ownership and decisions, with prevailing traditional, religious and customary laws and practices in 123 countries limiting their freedom to claim and protect their land assets (OECD, 2014). Women and children are often employed in informal sectors with higher exposure to risk, such as artisanal mining and waste collection. This inequality is further compounded by a low level of political representation, with only 25 per cent of parliamentary seats in governments around the world held by women (IPU, 2020). A stocktaking exercise with regard to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 2020, 25 years after its adoption, reveals that “major gaps remain and that obstacles, including structural barriers, discriminatory practices and the feminization of poverty, persist” (United Nations CSW, 2020). Estimates indicate that it will take, on average, another century to achieve gender parity globally. Indigenous peoples constitute another group that,

while comprising less than 6 per cent of the world’s population, is known for stewarding 80 per cent of the world’s biodiversity through traditional ecological knowledge (United Nations, 2009; Sobrevila, 2008). Indigenous peoples can also contribute to climate solutions through traditional knowledge, legal systems and cultures (United Nations General Assembly, 2019c).

18. Seventy-five years after the signing of the Charter of the United Nations, environmental multilateralism remains as crucial as ever. Global challenges such as climate change, high pollution levels, destruction of nature and the COVID-19 pandemic are clear signs of the need to champion environmental stewardship and cooperation. This multilateral cooperation must deliver solutions for sustainable development that integrate health, education, poverty reduction, and economic and social well-being. In its economic outlook for 2020, the United Nations warned that “amid a weakening commitment to multilateralism – whether in the economic or political arena – the capacity of the international community to contain and resolve conflicts has decreased” (United Nations, 2020c). Reinvigorating multilateralism is essential to achieve the 2030 Agenda. An important milestone will be reached in 2025 when the United Nations turns 80 and the period covered by the present Medium-Term Strategy comes to an end. This opportunity must be seized.

Seizing the opportunity to strengthen the United Nations development system reform through increased access to and use of environmental data and ensuring that the digital revolution helps deliver, not hinder, the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda

19. United Nations development system reform provides the framework for integrated policy guidance and technical support to countries to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

The United Nations must be ambitious in working with partners to enhance environmental sustainability through sharp analytics and to support Member States in fostering the conditions needed to meet their requests in paragraph 88 of *The Future We Want*. Coordinated work across the United Nations on common country analyzes and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework through the United Nations country teams has already demonstrated the importance of integrating the environment into Sustainable Development Goal monitoring and implementation.

20. High-quality, credible, open, shared, sex-disaggregated environmental data, assessments and expertise are critical to supporting integration efforts across the United Nations system.

In addition to contributing to the delivery of the Secretary-General's data strategy for 2020-2022 (United Nations, 2020a), options for ensuring stronger integration of environmental data and analysis include:

- a. engaging in the development of the One United Nations initiative and ensuring better use of accounting and statistics, including those generated under Multilateral Environmental Agreements, to promote sustainable development;
- b. enhancing, through the Environmental Management Group, Multilateral Environmental Agreements and multi-agency collaboration, the implementation of the United Nations System-wide Framework of Strategies on the Environment and environmental indicators and monitoring, and scaling up actions informed by environmental statistics and science, including through integrated analyzes across the three pillars of sustainable development;
- c. working with Multilateral Environmental Agreement secretariats and other multilateral platforms to

support coherent approaches to the Sustainable Development Goals among the Multilateral Environmental Agreements in terms of indicator methodologies and analysis;

- d. bolstering engagement with United Nations country teams to inform the common country analyzes on which the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework is built; and
- e. ensuring that UNEP, through the World Environment Situation Room, provides the prime global digital platform that allows governments and the public at large to visualize the state of, and pressures on, the world environment and feed this analysis into policies benefiting the environment and sustainable development.

21. Institutions at every level need to keep pace with the speed and scale of technological innovation in the digital space.

The digitalization of society and the economy and advances in artificial intelligence offer a massive opportunity to build greater environmental sustainability, resilience and transparency. Technology is transforming life in both developed and developing countries, and enhanced cooperation across the United Nations and beyond will be required to ensure that goals, policies and strategies remain relevant to the shifting economic, social and environmental landscape. At the same time, it will be important to be aware of the global digital divide; nearly 87 per cent of the population uses the Internet in developed countries compared to 19.1 per cent in the least developed countries. In addition, the Internet user gender gap for the least developed countries stood at 42.8 per cent in 2019, compared to 17 per cent globally (ITU, 2019). Worldwide, digital technology is moving faster than society's ability to govern it. There is a growing understanding that a societal leap must be made concurrently with the technological revolution. Transparency on the environmental performance and carbon footprints of goods and services must remain a shared goal in line with multilaterally agreed norms and standards. Moreover, access to environmental data and information on environmental changes is paramount for sound environmental governance and to encourage the participation of communities and disadvantaged groups. For decision making to increase equity, technology must be leveraged for greater inclusion of those at risk of being left behind. At the same time, environmental considerations linked to the use of more digital technologies, from extraction of rare-earth elements to energy use by devices and data centres, need to be kept under review.

Lessons learned



A woman feeds her granddaughter
in Afghanistan.
Photo: UNEP / I. Riabchuk

Building on the past for higher performance in the future

22. UNEP strives for continuous improvement and follows an adaptive management model that is constantly refreshed through exhaustive monitoring and evaluation of its performance.

23. In 2019, UNEP launched a transformation process to become more effective in delivering its mandate, with more operational integration, clarity of focus and learning from past lessons.

This process resulted in a shift in its organizational capabilities and identity to deliver more impactful results. This strategy thus builds on opportunities and recommendations for improvement arising from that transformation process, which is informed by lessons learned from previous medium-term strategies, as well as a blend of internal and external reviews and audits (UNEP, 2020c).

Investing in staff for sustainable organizational change

24. Promoting and reinforcing changes in individual attitudes and behaviours and creating channels to communicate feedback across all staff play a prominent role in successful organizational change management (JIU, 2019d).

UNEP will continue to build a healthy, results- and performance-driven organization by tapping into the expertise and knowledge of staff to forge new forms of behaviour, while building collaborative teams at all levels and developing a strategic, more collaborative leadership that directs resources toward agreed priorities. Building on a progressive diagnosis of the cultural and behavioural traits within the organization, UNEP will invest in providing staff training in knowledge, skills and attitudes that support more coherent internal delivery of the organization's aspirations under this strategy and reviewing the acquired capacities. By building stronger supervisory and peer support systems, UNEP will ensure that learnings translate into long-term capacities and ultimately improve day-to-day work routines, building a foundation for a cultural transformation of the organization that enhances outcomes.

Getting gender right: increased responsiveness to gender equality and human rights

25. Despite appointing gender focal points and introducing "responsiveness to human rights" and "gender equity" as stand-alone project evaluation criteria in 2018, UNEP performance on the delivery of gender and human rights outcomes at the project level remains weak (UNEP, 2020c). UNEP already takes part in the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. As of 2019, UNEP had met or exceeded 8 of its 17 gender equality and empowerment of women indicators (UN-Women, 2019), but that is not enough. UNEP will work to fully implement Environment Assembly resolution 4/17 on promoting gender equality and the human rights and empowerment of women and girls in environmental governance. UNEP will fully support Member States in their achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5 in the context of the environment, calling for women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of environmental decision making. The focus will be on operationalizing gender and human rights dimensions and non-discrimination issues in programme and project design. UNEP will foster the widespread use of a gender lens to ensure that gender equality and human rights perspectives are fully embedded and integrated through associated principles. Linkages between gender indicators, gender-disaggregated data and policy recommendations will be observed and applied, as will gender-informed feedback loops and reinforced monitoring frameworks. UNEP will also collect good practices that can be shared at the wider United Nations level.

26. UNEP will invest in enhancing the abilities of staff, including within the Multilateral Environmental Agreements, to better understand, implement, monitor and analyze gender and human rights and intersectional gender and non-discrimination issues, with the goal of integrating related objectives into the organization's analytical and operational work. Moving beyond project design and monitoring, UNEP will provide programme and project implementation support to ensure that gender issues are integrated across the programme cycle, not just at the design stage, but also during implementation and project evaluation, with feedback loops for continuous improvement.

Securing a stronger organizational design for collective accountability

27. Accountability is critical to efficient and transparent operations, including in cooperation and coordination with the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (United Nations, 2019b). UNEP will review its organizational design, including the allocation of management roles and responsibilities among its divisions and regional offices, to ensure solid alignment with the priorities outlined in this strategy. As part of this process, UNEP will place emphasis on senior managers to improve task assignment and implementation for more cohesive, inclusive and better performance. In pursuit of the United Nations management reforms, UNEP will also improve internal quality controls and compliance for enhanced performance. To that end, UNEP will upgrade and improve its standards for internal controls and management, providing oversight, identifying opportunities for greater efficiency and ensuring compliance with the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations, including on enterprise risk management.

Increasing focus on management for results

28. UNEP recognizes that the continuing transition to results-based management is as much a transformation of the institution's internal culture as it is a management issue. The use of data, monitoring and evaluation is a critical tool for decision making (United Nations, 2019b). UNEP will enhance its internal capacity to deliver results and will develop indicators that are aligned with organizational objectives to reflect true transformational change. It will engage in project cycle reform, invest in human resources and build capacity through customized and in-house training and the establishment of technical networks across the organization that can support programme delivery, while developing "best-in-class" fiduciary and governance standards that build on enterprise risk management tools. As is indicated in its programme of work, UNEP will use Sustainable Development Goal indicators or internationally agreed environmental indicators as much as possible in its results framework to increase ambition. Furthermore, it will strive to monitor change over a longer term rather than a single biennium or the four years of

this strategy. To that end, UNEP will employ impact metrics with project performance dashboards and cross-project leader boards to gauge effectiveness and assess the level of uptake of its products and services. Projects that cannot demonstrate an impact on key metrics after a prescribed period and a series of iterations will be closed. UNEP will also seek to monitor and report on key digital metrics, including for social media (e.g., engagement, reach, referral and conversion rates), platform performance (e.g., unique users, new and returning users, session pages and duration, downloads, and application programming interface calls) and uptake (e.g., references, use of data, application in policy design and implementation, and media coverage).

Mobilizing resources and leveraging partnerships to enhance efficiency

29. Securing contributions to the Environment Fund, as well as funding that is only softly earmarked, is indispensable if UNEP is to be equipped to deliver on the priorities agreed by Member States while demonstrating tangible results (United Nations, 2019b). As was recognized in the online survey on UNEP funding carried out in 2020, efforts by UNEP and its partners to widen and secure the resource base for the execution of this strategy, including through an increased understanding of the factors that determine or hinder Member States' financial contributions to UNEP, need to be sustained (UNEP, 2020a). UNEP will continue to engage in dialogue with Member States on these issues, and will work to define its comparative advantage and funding needs strategically, for both core and earmarked funding, and look comprehensively at the landscape of potential funding sources. UNEP will also engage in strategic and innovative approaches to resource mobilization (United Nations, 2019b), including through stronger communication of the value of the Environment Fund and the results achieved through its support, as well as the effects of insufficient core funding on UNEP's implementation efforts. UNEP will update its 2017 resource mobilization strategy to reflect the recent decisions of the Environment Assembly, as well as the results of the 2020 online survey, and will prepare a fully developed implementation plan for the strategy, with timelines and related resources. It will also update its partnership strategy to ensure stronger pursuit of its comparative advantage to match its increased ambition for resource mobilization in order to deliver on its strategic priorities.

A Medium-Term Strategy for the Decade of Action



Ecosystem restoration project in Jamaica.
Photo: UNEP



UNEP's vision for the 2030 Agenda – a 2025 strategy with a 2050 outlook

30. The UNEP situational analysis indicates that the world is facing three major environmental crises: climate change, biodiversity and nature loss, and pollution. These are all largely driven by human activity and unsustainable patterns of consumption and production. Tackling these crises is critical to improving the health of the environment, as well as social and economic health, as the COVID-19 crisis has shown. A healthy environment, healthy people and healthy economies are the foundation for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.²

31. The Secretary-General has stressed that “as we enter a Decade of Action on the Sustainable Development Goals, we have to convince people that the United Nations is relevant to all and that multilateralism offers real solutions to global challenges” (United Nations, 2019a). In line with its mandate, UNEP will seize the opportunity provided by the Decade of Action to demonstrate the value of multilateralism by actively shaping a more balanced, equitable and sustainable future for all, where the environment is at the centre of political and economic decision making and where all countries are on track to meet their environmental goals and aspirations.

32. The present Medium-Term Strategy charts the contribution of UNEP to the 2030 Agenda and the Decade of Action, delivered against a 2022–2025 time frame but with a 2050 outlook on planetary sustainability for people, prosperity and equity.³

² More than half of the Sustainable Development Goals have an environmental focus or address the sustainability of natural resources, and more than 86 of the 169 targets concern the environment directly, including at least 1 in each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (UNEP, 2016).

³ The sixth edition of the *Global Environment Outlook* recognizes that maintaining a forward-looking perspective in the form of a long-term 2050 vision is critical to assessing development pathways towards achieving the environmental dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals and making progress on the Multilateral Environmental Agreements, particularly on the nexus areas of sustainable consumption and production, human well-being (including in relation to pollution) and the natural resource base (including in relation to biodiversity loss and climate change).

Strategic approaches central to the vision of UNEP for the 2030 Agenda and its contribution to the Decade of Action

33. UNEP will support an integrated and balanced implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It will continue to build the capacity of Member States and partners to integrate the environment into all aspects of sustainable development, leveraging the interactions and co-benefits of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. As custodian of 26 Sustainable Development Goal indicators, UNEP will promote integrated approaches to country planning and implementation that support the incorporation of environmental perspectives into country plans and policies while connecting to other development objectives, such as human rights, gender equality, economic growth and employment.

34. UNEP will strengthen institutional capacity for gender-responsive programme delivery. Gender equality is a multiplier and cross-cutting factor of sustainability and an effective and efficient way to address issues of poverty, health, food security and access to energy. In the period 2022–2025, UNEP will leverage the opportunities provided by the Sustainable Development Goals to strengthen the institutional capacity of policymakers, UNEP staff and key partners to develop and implement gender-responsive policies and strategies. UNEP will use information from its stakeholders and government partners to secure commitments and elicit collective gender-transformative actions.

35. UNEP, working with its many partners, will deliver transformational results. It will align its planning and action with the 2030 Agenda and other internationally agreed environmental goals and aspire to deliver long-term, transformational impacts beyond the four years covered by this strategy. UNEP will identify the key transformative actions for the environment that will drive the desired systemic changes at the heart of sustainable development. In collaboration with its partners, UNEP will target these drivers through leveraging a “networked multilateralism” that demonstrates impact and scale, bringing together the United Nations system, regional organizations, international financial institutions and other key players (United Nations Secretary-General, 2020b).



Building the resilience of Kune Vaini Lagoon, Albania, through ecosystem based adaptation. Photo: UNEP

To achieve focus, UNEP will develop a typology of projects that meet the following criteria:

- a. alignment with UNEP core mandate areas and a focus on the delivery of this strategy, with a strong expectation of outcomes that lead to transformative change for sustainable development;
- b. delivery on multiple Sustainable Development Goals, spanning the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainable development, as well as other internationally agreed environmental goals and aspirations, including the Environment Assembly resolutions;
- c. demonstration of new and/or innovative concepts that provide opportunities to leapfrog past outdated paradigms while maintaining a clear vision that connects with and capitalizes on the diverse expertise of external partners, enabling joint development, staffing, financing and implementation; and
- d. demonstration of value for money through optimal use of resources to achieve the intended outcomes.

36. UNEP will provide a clear “line of sight” for its delivery of the 2030 Agenda, from the internationally agreed environmental goals to regional and national action.

It will pursue the global aspirations of the Sustainable Development Goals while delivering support in response to national needs and realities, and taking account of differing regional integration processes, capacities and levels of development. Through its regional offices, UNEP will increase its strategic engagement with regional inter-agency mechanisms, including regional commissions and forums on sustainable development, regional collaborative platforms⁴ and issue-based coalitions. This will ensure increased consensus and better institutional coherence on sustainable development while increasing the delivery of a common United Nations approach to regional Sustainable Development Goal priorities.

37. UNEP will make full use of the United Nations development system reform to extend its reach as the global environmental authority to support all Member States in their pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Working with and through its sister United Nations entities, UNEP will support United Nations country teams, providing

⁴ In line with the guidance provided by Member States in resolution E/RES/2019/15 to reposition the United Nations regional assets, the Secretary-General created a regional collaborative platform that would absorb existing, duplicative coordination mechanisms to foster collaboration on sustainable development across United Nations development system entities operating at the regional level.

environmental data and analysis so that common country analyzes have environmental science as their foundation. United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks will then likewise include strong environmental components, providing clear guidance and pathways for the entire United Nations system to support the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

38. UNEP will pursue collective action on environmental sustainability, resilience and environmental risk across all aspects of the Charter of the United Nations, including peace and security, human rights and sustainable development within the scope of its mandate. The United Nations leadership collectively decided to “develop a common approach to integrating biodiversity and nature-based solutions for sustainable development into the United Nations policy and programme planning and delivery” (United Nations Secretary-General, 2020a). UNEP will leverage this collective inter-agency commitment to support the systemic changes that will enable the United Nations Secretariat, agencies, funds and programmes to make significant progress on the climate, nature and pollution agendas.

39. UNEP will strengthen South-South and triangular cooperation⁵ to enable all Member States to progress towards environmental sustainability, while fostering complementarities with North-South cooperation. UNEP will promote South-South and triangular cooperation across its policy, programming and partnership activities.⁶ Through continued engagement with the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation and other multilateral system entities, governments and non-governmental organizations,

5 South-South cooperation is a process whereby two or more developing countries pursue their individual and/or shared national capacity development objectives through exchanges of knowledge, skills, resources and technical know-how, and through regional and interregional collective actions, including partnerships involving governments, regional organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector, for their mutual benefit within and across regions. Triangular cooperation involves southern-driven partnerships between two or more developing countries supported by a developed country(ies) or multilateral organization(s) to implement development cooperation programmes and projects (as defined in the 2016 framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation (SSC/176/3)).

6 The UNEP Strategy for South-South and Triangular Cooperation (https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/31654/SSTC_Strategy.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y), adopted in March 2020, will serve as the guiding framework for all UNEP South-South and triangular cooperation activities during the decade 2020-2030.

UNEP will strengthen regional engagement and inter-agency linkages to more closely monitor and follow up on strategic and political issues related to South-South and triangular cooperation, while promoting North-South cooperation and supporting the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries.⁷

40. UNEP will work to leave no one behind while increasing its focus on the special needs of disaster- and conflict-affected states. It will address the special needs of least developed countries, land-locked developing countries and small island developing states, facilitating access to finance, technology and innovative solutions to help them build more resilient and inclusive economies and societies in a post-COVID-19 world. In its contribution, UNEP will channel the voices of those most vulnerable to environmental degradation, including women, indigenous peoples and their communities, and children and youth.

41. Special attention will be paid to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. By focusing on the special needs of countries that are vulnerable to, or affected by, disaster and conflicts, UNEP will assist Member States in fully implementing the Sendai Framework. UNEP will assist United Nations peacekeeping, peacebuilding and humanitarian and political missions where dedicated responses to environmental dimensions of a crisis are required. To optimize prevention and preparedness, UNEP will support capacities for early warning and early action, including through building an understanding of the interlinkages between climate change, natural resource extraction, security and migration. UNEP will also engage in emergency and short- to medium-term post-crisis support, assisting Member States with integrating environmental considerations into oversight, assessment and planning for better response and recovery.

7 Adopted in 1978 by the United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries.

UNEP focus:

Three planetary crises,
three interconnected
strategic objectives



Government workers help fight a locust plague in Isiolo, Kenya during the COVID-19 pandemic.
Photo: UNEP / D. Moore

Enabling thematic and foundational subprogrammes for increased ambition

42. In the four-year period covered by this strategy, UNEP will articulate its vision, which spans the 2030 Agenda and the Decade of Action and beyond, by developing responses and deploying solutions that aspire to achieve three interlinked and mutually reinforcing strategic objectives:

- a. climate stability,⁸ where net zero greenhouse gas emissions and resilience in the face of climate change are achieved;
- b. living in harmony with nature (SCBD, 2010), where humanity prospers in harmony with nature; and
- c. towards a pollution-free planet,⁹ where pollution is prevented and controlled, and good environmental quality and improved health and well-being are ensured for all.

Three principal areas of action...

43. In response to the findings of its situational analysis, UNEP will tackle three planetary crises through three thematic subprogrammes, on climate action, nature action, and chemicals and pollution action. Because these areas are deeply interconnected, the UNEP programme of work for 2022–2023 (UNEP/EA.5/3/Add.1) outlines the organization's approach, which is aimed at ensuring the delivery of multiple benefits and mutual outcomes that contribute to UNEP's vision for planetary sustainability and human health and well-being.

...underpinned by two foundational subprogrammes...

44. To mitigate and adapt to climate change, halt the degradation of nature and arrest pollution, UNEP will draw on its core competencies and base all actions on the analysis of prevailing and credible science while drawing on its expertise in environmental law and governance. Since 1972, when UNEP was created, environmental science and environmental law have

⁸ Fully supporting a balanced implementation of the mitigation and adaptation commitments under the Paris Agreement.

⁹ In 2017, Member States adopted a ministerial declaration, *Towards A Pollution-Free Planet* (UNEP/EA.3/HLS.1), as a key outcome of the third session of the Environment Assembly. In the declaration, ministers for the environment requested the Executive Director of UNEP to prepare an implementation plan on the issue of a pollution-free planet for consideration by the Environment Assembly at its fourth session. The Environment Assembly then adopted the *Towards A Pollution-Free Planet Implementation Plan* in 2019 by resolution 4/21.

been critical and constant pillars at the core of its work, informing engagements and actions in all other related areas of action. UNEP will step up delivery of these core areas of work, catalyzing actions outlined through two foundational subprogrammes on science-policy and environmental governance.

... and facilitated by two enabling subprogrammes

45. Science and environmental governance alone will not enable the transformation needed to reach a more sustainable future that is pollution-free and in which nature and climate are stabilized. Engagement with finance and business to deliver more sustainable patterns of consumption and production will be key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. This shift will be at the centre of an enabling subprogramme on financial and economic transformation.

46. In parallel, as the world sees ever-increasing connectivity, digitalization will become key to systematizing, integrating and democratizing environmental data, knowledge and insight for new collaboration opportunities and enhanced impact.

This will be the focus of an enabling subprogramme on digital transformation.

47. UNEP will employ a three-pronged delivery approach in all of its seven subprogrammes:

- a. applying cutting-edge scientific advances in data collection and display;
- b. working with policymakers, relevant partners from science and industry, indigenous peoples and local communities, vulnerable groups, the investor community and other non-governmental actors, as well as other United Nations entities; and
- c. working across regions and countries and at all subnational levels to strengthen effective environmental governance and rule of law.

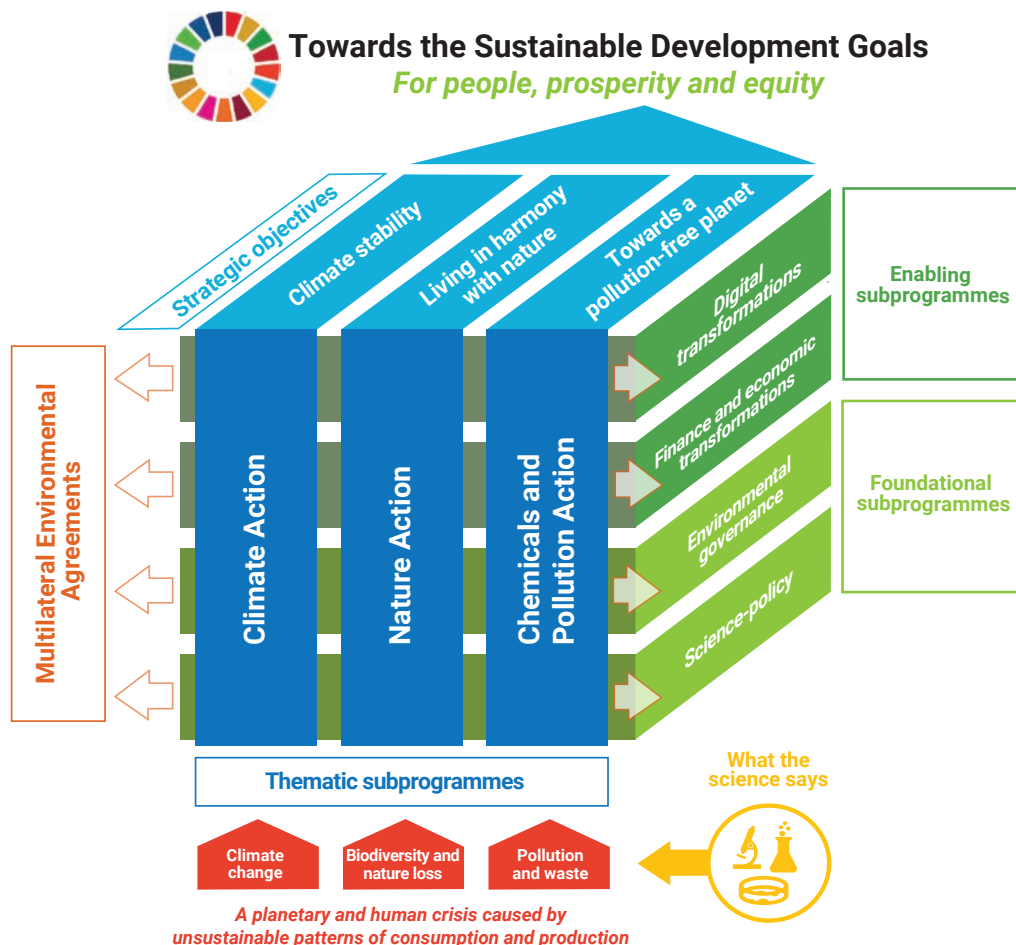
48. The seven UNEP subprogrammes will support, accelerate and scale up a shift to sustainable consumption and production patterns¹⁰ to achieve planetary sustainability for people, prosperity and equity. This will be achieved through:

- a. increased support for just transitions to clean energy, resource efficiency and circularity in the use

¹⁰ The implementation of these actions will be supported by the policies, tools and methods developed through the enabling and sectoral programmes of the 10YFP/One Planet network, the UNEP Finance Initiative, the Partnership for Action on Green Economy and other initiatives that support the transition to inclusive green economies. Maintaining the 10YFP/One Planet network until 2030 will enable continued support for countries' work towards Sustainable Development Goals 8 and 12.

- of energy, materials and other production factors in high greenhouse-gas-emitting and resource-intensive sectors, including agriculture, to enable the adoption of net zero or low-emission targets;
 - b. championing of efficient, circular and cleaner production processes to deliver goods and services that reduce environmental degradation and detoxify land, cities, the ocean, rivers and air;
 - c. enhanced support for ecosystem-based policies and restorative and regenerative practices to reduce habitat fragmentation by agriculture and food systems, extractive industries, infrastructure and other resource- and nature-intensive value chains;
 - d. increased advocacy of, and information-sharing for, behavioural and educational tools and curricula and mechanisms to inform and influence consumer choices through increased awareness of the chemical, greenhouse gas, environmental, resource and waste footprint of goods and services; and
 - e. promotion of alignment of private finance (investments, banking and insurance) with sustainability, responsibility and net-zero emissions to influence investment and production decisions.
- 49. Collaboration with the Multilateral Environmental Agreements will be central to all actions across the UNEP subprogrammes to secure stronger synergies and enhance impact.** Complementing national legislation and bilateral agreements, Multilateral Environmental Agreements form the overarching international legal basis for global efforts to address environmental issues. Partnership will continue to be a cornerstone of UNEP support provided to countries to implement the 2030 Agenda.

UNEP Medium-Term Strategy 2022–2025: on the road to 2030



Thematic subprogrammes



Floods triggered by heavy rain in Dar es salaam, Tanzania. Photo: Shutterstock / M. Husein

Climate action

50. Keeping a clear focus on the Paris Agreement is essential for guiding collective climate action in line with sustainable development. Achieving long-term climate stability will depend on countries making balanced progress towards their mitigation and adaptation commitments under the Paris Agreement, including “holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C” and “increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development” (UNFCCC, 2016). A transition towards climate stability in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement recognizes that, by 2025:

- a. countries and legal entities are increasingly adopting decarbonization, dematerialization and resilience pathways;
- b. countries and stakeholders have increased capacity, finance and access to technologies to deliver on the adaptation and mitigation goals of the Paris Agreement; and
- c. state and non-state actors have adopted the enhanced transparency framework arrangements under the Paris Agreement.

51. The expected 2030 outcome of this UNEP subprogramme is that “government and non-government development actions are compatible with the long-term mitigation and resilience goals of the Paris Agreement.”

52. The climate action subprogramme will operate through the following principles.

- a. **Supporting country and stakeholder emission cuts and adaptation to climate change to facilitate stronger interactions between science, policy, finance, technology and the economy:** UNEP will support countries in building public support for market and political strategies and decisions that are compatible with the latest scientific information, including from the social sciences, and promote sustainable consumption and production to achieve the largest impacts possible in terms of mitigating climate change and increasing resilience. Engagement of the finance industry and working through private-sector partnerships will be key to shifting public and private investments towards sustainable choices and business models that are adequately incentivized to support countries in achieving their climate goals and aspirations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and Paris Agreement, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals.
- b. **Supporting countries and stakeholders in achieving rapid, just and comprehensive decarbonization in line with their climate commitments and aspirations:** UNEP will take a value chain and multi-sectoral approach

BY 2025

Countries and stakeholders have increased capacity, finance and access to technologies to deliver on the adaptation and mitigation goals of the Paris Agreement.

Countries and legal entities are increasingly adopting decarbonization, dematerialization and resilience pathways.

State and non-state actors have adopted the enhanced transparency framework arrangements under the Paris Agreement.

TOWARDS CLIMATE STABILITY

that demonstrates opportunities to deploy timely renewable energy and energy efficiency solutions at all geographic levels, halt deforestation and habitat loss, restore degraded ecosystems, harness the potential of oceans and coastal ecosystems, change the way we produce and consume food, adopt more circular and resource-efficient business practices, and redesign our cities and transportation sectors.

- c. Focusing on those who can contribute to the highest impact while supporting the most vulnerable:** UNEP will help all countries raise the level of their mitigation ambition, with a focus on countries with the largest emissions. In parallel, UNEP will continue to support adaptation action while integrating aspects of human health, gender responsiveness, environmental security and poverty eradication, particularly in the countries that are most vulnerable and most in need, such as disaster- and conflict-affected countries, least developed countries and small island developing states. This will support the collective aspirations included in the nationally determined contributions and long-term strategies under the Paris Agreement and other strategic instruments.
- d. Promoting policies and actions for sustainable consumption and production practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions:** UNEP will support governments, business and individuals in making informed choices to increase production of and demand for goods and services that are more resource-efficient and less emission-intensive, building on the work of relevant International Resource Panel analyzes and supporting a growing number of countries in identifying greenhouse gas emission hotspots in national economies.
- e. Delivering tangible results through partnerships and integrated approaches:** UNEP will channel and scale up its actions through networks

and partnerships, including the financial and technology mechanisms of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (the Global Environment Facility, the Green Climate Fund, and the Climate Technology Centre and Network and Technology Executive Committee), for increased impact. Working across the wider United Nations system to achieve better synergy, including with United Nations country teams and other United Nations entities, UNEP climate actions will follow an integrated approach that links the environment to the pillars of the work of the United Nations: peace and security, human rights and development.

The climate action subprogramme will focus on the comparative advantage of UNEP to achieve three 2025 outcomes

Outcome 1: Decision makers at all levels adopt decarbonization, dematerialization and resilience pathways

53. In collaboration with its networks,¹¹ UNEP will support countries in taking full advantage of the opportunities presented by decarbonization, dematerialization and resilience and linking these to higher climate aspirations. UNEP will focus on

¹¹ UNEP supports several networks and partnerships across science (e.g., the World Adaptation Science Programme), technology (e.g., the Climate Technology Centre and Network) and finance (e.g., the Net-Zero Asset Owner Alliance), as well as in all key sectors (e.g., United for Efficiency, the Cool Coalition, the Sustainable Rice Platform, UN-REDD, the Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles, and the Global Alliance on Buildings and Construction). The United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, led by UNEP and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, will be a key platform for advancing ecosystem-based approaches to climate change. The full range of current and future partnerships will be described in the programme of work and in-depth operational strategies.

sectors with the highest emissions,¹² based on the latest scientifically credible evidence of their share of national emissions and their role in ensuring the resilience of the socioeconomic fabric. UNEP will design and highlight opportunities for action in these sectors through action-oriented partnerships, including private-sector alliances, and support the country-level uptake of sustainable solutions ranging from ecosystem-based approaches to sustainable technologies and dematerialization practices, in line with national priorities. Special focus will be placed on an evidence-based introduction and uptake of better technologies, including digital technologies, for integration into sectoral and national policies and decisions. UNEP will help countries embed these opportunities in their revolving climate aspirations, linking them to adjustments in the policy and regulatory frameworks that inform nationally determined contributions and long-term strategies, as well as climate adaptation planning (e.g., early warning systems).



UNEP helps lower greenhouse gas emissions in line with the Paris Agreement while supporting states as they adapt to an already-changing climate, promoting sustainable development in the process.

54. UNEP will support countries in catalyzing public support and political will for climate action.

It will also support advocacy for societal change that brings climate-positive outcomes while creating jobs and enabling a just transition. UNEP will focus on generating science-driven public support for ambitious climate advocacy and supporting sustainable consumer behaviour. UNEP will continue to function as a link between policymakers and the public, leveraging, for example, the One Planet network to communicate the benefits of using sustainable products and adopting sustainable lifestyles while sharing information that supports making the economic case for such change.¹³ Facilitating public access to environmental information and increasing

¹² Including energy, industry, agriculture, forestry, transport, buildings and finance, among others.

¹³ The One Planet network is a UNEP-hosted open multi-stakeholder partnership that aims to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production in both developed and developing countries and implement Sustainable Development Goal 12 under 10YFP. <https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/>.

public awareness through formal and non-formal education, youth-led action and grassroots campaigns will be key levers of change that will shift knowledge and attitudes across society.

**Outcome 2:
Countries and stakeholders have increased capacity, finance and access to technologies to deliver on the adaptation and mitigation goals**

55. UNEP will facilitate inter-institutional collection, sharing and validation of climate-related knowledge and capacity at the national and subnational levels.

It will contribute to enhanced capacity and promote cooperation among sectoral ministries with a stake in the implementation of mitigation and adaptation actions while also securing greater involvement of subnational authorities in knowledge- and data-sharing and related decision making to facilitate synergies and harmonize efforts. UNEP will further assess the potential, risks and gaps in relation to measures for tackling climate change to increase transparency and accountability and foster knowledge generation.

56. UNEP will work to connect countries to climate technology solutions

by providing technical assistance, capacity-building and advice on technology solutions and accelerated access to climate technologies for low-emission and climate-resilient development at the request of recipient countries, including through the Climate Technology Centre and Network, and other partners. UNEP will also facilitate the development of enabling policy, and legal and regulatory frameworks for technology solutions tailored to the needs of individual countries by harnessing the expertise of global networks of technology companies and institutions.

57. UNEP will support the accelerated alignment of private and public finance with the long-term finance goals of the Paris Agreement.

It will support the adoption of sustainable business and market models that can facilitate a strategic shift towards low-emission and resilient pathways in public- and private-sector investments and long-term planning across all sectors. Leveraging its partnerships and multi-stakeholder platforms, UNEP will support the accelerated design and implementation of public policies and fiscal incentives to address climate risks and impacts within the scope of an investment environment that is conducive to the achievement of the Paris Agreement goals. Providing reliable, accessible, state-of-the-art environmental

information, including on public policies and incentives, that reduces uncertainty and risk in decision making, will continue to be a central asset in UNEP interventions.

**Outcome 3:
State and non-state actors adopt the enhanced transparency framework arrangements under the Paris Agreement**

58. In collaboration with its networks and partners, including the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and Global Environment Facility, UNEP will help countries meet their transparency and other reporting obligations. It will also implement the enhanced transparency framework for action and support established under the Paris Agreement.¹⁴ UNEP will capitalize on its role of data-driven authority to support national institutions in tracking and reporting on climate actions, including through the development of greenhouse gas inventories; mapping progress towards their nationally determined contributions and adaptation actions; and tracking financial support provided and mobilized. The enhancement of existing national arrangements and sharpening of related regulatory frameworks will be central to these actions. Synergies will be pursued with global and regional Multilateral Environmental Agreements, including with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, with respect to the work conducted to support the transition towards the enhanced transparency framework and with the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. This will facilitate coordination and complementarity between reporting obligations and contribute to greater coherence in tracking progress in implementing decisions under the Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

59. UNEP will assist countries in assessing and better reporting on their climate-related national capabilities and circumstances, including their capacity-building and technology needs, related finance, investment and trade trends, and areas for improvement, especially for least developed countries and small island developing states.

¹⁴ Article 13 of the Paris Agreement established an enhanced transparency framework for action and support to guide countries on reporting their greenhouse gas emissions, their progress towards their nationally determined contributions, their climate change impacts and adaptation, the support provided and mobilized and the support needed and received. The enhanced transparency framework also includes processes for technical experts to review reported information and a multilateral peer review where countries can ask each other questions.

60. Through its networks and partners, UNEP will encourage non-governmental stakeholders, including the private sector and finance community, to increase coherence and transparency in the reporting of their climate actions. This will contribute to increasing global confidence in the adoption of business models and market decisions towards decarbonization and resilience pathways.

61. UNEP will help countries measure progress towards decarbonization and resilience for stronger engagement in the global stocktake process.¹⁵ UNEP will provide the best available scientific information and best practices to guide countries towards effectively assessing progress and evaluating the need for enhanced action and financial support to ratchet up the level of their climate ambition. Through the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, International Resource Panel and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and its flagship reports (e.g., the *Emissions Gap Report*), UNEP will deploy the most up-to-date, state-of-the-art compilation of climate change metrics and sectoral knowledge. This will support country engagement in the global stocktake, increasing compliance with the Paris Agreement in a more transparent way. To that end, and in partnership with other relevant organizations, UNEP will facilitate dialogue between government actors and non-government stakeholders, including subnational authorities, businesses and civil society, to add value and increase the accuracy, accountability and relevance of the information collected and shared by decision makers. Guided by the need to ensure greater climate ambition in line with the aspirations of the nationally determined contributions and long-term strategies and other strategic instruments, UNEP will also focus on supporting countries in increasing their capacities to use climate change information in development planning and investment decisions and monitor climate finance trends as pathways to increased ambition.

¹⁵ Article 14 of the Paris Agreement established the global stocktake as its key ambition mechanism. Every five years, countries will engage in the process to assess collective progress towards the agreement's long-term goals. This stocktaking process aims to inform the next round of nationally determined contributions to increase their level of ambition. It also offers the opportunity to evaluate the need for enhanced action and support.

Nature action

62. Nature underpins the functions and health of the planet and thereby the existence and health of humankind.

Living in harmony with nature means “maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people”, as well as ensuring that “biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used”. (SCBD, 2010). Dependency on biodiversity and ecosystems, including for food, fibre, materials, water, medicines and human health, climate regulation and protection from extreme events, has been outlined clearly in assessments by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, the *Global Environment Outlook* and the International Resource Panel, among others. Biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation undermine the resilience of our economy and many critical product value chains and ultimately will prevent progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and human well-being. To facilitate a transition towards living in harmony with nature, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and the long-term goals of the future post-2020 global biodiversity framework as agreed by Member States (SCBD, 2018a), it is expected that, by 2025:

- a. the implementation of the agreed post-2020 global biodiversity framework is well under way through related national planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting processes;
- b. biodiversity is mainstreamed (SCBD, 2018b) for sustainable development and across key themes and sectors (e.g., food and agriculture, sustainable forest management and zero deforestation, health, infrastructure, mining, tourism, trade, energy, cities, finance, governance and justice) to realize multiple benefits and avoid negative impacts on nature;
- c. significant actions are being taken to reduce ecosystems degradation and build the resilience of landscapes and seascapes, with ecosystem integrity and conservation being leveraged as assets and tools for disaster risk reduction and greater social resilience; and
- d. methodologies and tools for integrating biodiversity and ecosystems into consumer, infrastructure and financial decision making have been developed and made available for governments and financial institutions to align their policies and investment portfolios with global biodiversity targets.

BY 2025

The implementation of the agreed post-2020 global biodiversity framework is well under way through related national planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting processes.

Biodiversity is mainstreamed (SCBD, 2018b) for sustainable development and across key themes and sectors (e.g., food and agriculture, sustainable forest management and zero deforestation, health, infrastructure, mining, tourism, trade, energy, cities, finance, governance and justice) to realize multiple benefits and avoid negative impacts on nature.

Significant actions are being taken to reduce ecosystem degradation and build the resilience of landscapes and seascapes, with ecosystem integrity and conservation being leveraged as assets and tools for disaster risk reduction and greater social resilience.

Methodologies and tools for integrating biodiversity and ecosystems into consumer, infrastructure and financial decision making have been developed and made available for governments and financial institutions to align their policies and investment portfolios with global biodiversity targets.

TOWARDS LIVING IN HARMONY WITH NATURE



For decades, indigenous leader and UNEP Champion of the Earth, Nemonte Nenquimo has fought to protect the Amazon rainforest in Ecuador from oil exploitation. Photo: Reuters / J. Zúñiga

63. The expected 2030 outcome of this UNEP subprogramme is that “recovery of nature occurs and is contributing positively to human well-being.”

64. The nature action subprogramme will operate through the following principles.

- a. *Articulating a pathway to living in harmony with nature:*** UNEP will focus on increasing ambitions, building broad-based support and partnerships for transformational change for sustainable development, strengthening policy and regulatory frameworks and scaling up best practices. These actions will deliver science-based solutions for nature across sectors and levels of governance to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem integrity, which are key to many economic activities and the provision of goods and services critical for human welfare. Together, these actions will set the world on a pathway to ensuring well-functioning ecosystems and environmental safeguards, poverty eradication, social resilience, the creation of green and decent jobs, and a resilient economic and trade system based on more sustainable consumption and production patterns that are in line with internationally agreed norms and standards.
- b. *Realizing impact and strength through partnerships:*** UNEP will strengthen its strategic partnerships with organizations at the global, regional, national and local levels to support Member States in building their capacities, including through facilitating access to appropriate financial and technology-related means, towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the three goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity

and its protocols,¹⁶ as well as the agreed post-2020 global biodiversity framework and the relevant decisions of the governing bodies of other Multilateral Environmental Agreements. UNEP will contribute data, knowledge and technical expertise to the United Nations Sustainable Development Group teams at the global, regional and national levels to address environmental concerns, promote better utilization and management of natural resources and integrate biodiversity and ecosystem-based approaches into the planning and delivery of national sustainable development frameworks and Sustainable Development Goal strategies. This will include close collaboration with the secretariats of key Multilateral Environmental Agreements, UNDP, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and WHO to deliver direct benefits for people and nature in Member States. UNEP will mobilize civil-society support for the nature agenda through partnerships, investment in outreach and engagement with key stakeholders, such as academia, civil society, consumers, women, youth, indigenous peoples, technology providers and the private sector. Through the equal engagement of women and men, UNEP will ensure that this support is also gender inclusive. In supporting the humanitarian community and United Nations country teams, UNEP will work through its environmental emergency response partnership with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. In the field of ocean

¹⁶ Including the Sharm El-Sheikh Declaration on Investing in Biodiversity for People and Planet (CBD/COP/14/12), adopted on 15 November 2018.

governance, the Regional Seas Programme will continue to be UNEP's delivery mechanism, working also with other ecosystem-based organizations, such as regional fisheries bodies.

The nature action subprogramme will focus on the comparative advantage of UNEP to achieve three 2025 outcomes

Outcome 1: An economically and socially sustainable pathway for halting and reversing the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem integrity is established

65. UNEP will assist Member States in developing integrated strategies for achieving a sustainable balance between human prosperity and the sustainability of the natural resource base underpinning socioeconomic development. This will require deep transformations in our current economic systems, which currently privatize benefits while externalizing environmental costs and contributing substantially to inequalities. UNEP, in collaboration with its partners, will support these transformations by assisting Member States in developing sustainable



UNEP delivers science-based solutions to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity while restoring ecosystems, which is key to many economic activities as well as the provision of goods and services critical to human welfare.

economic pathways that benefit both people and nature and through mobilizing public support for the nature agenda. A recognition of the true value of nature, as well as of the cost of its degradation, are essential for the transition to a more sustainable and resilient economy. UNEP will tailor tools and guidance for the valuation of natural capital and the design and implementation of policies and practices supporting the shift to sustainable consumption and production. It will also refine nationally relevant metrics for measuring inclusive wealth and promoting their use in development planning processes, with close reference to the targets and indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as those agreed under the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. UNEP will also assist countries in developing integrated national infrastructure plans that prioritize ecosystems

and ecosystem-based approaches, including natural infrastructure.

66. UNEP will support countries in developing policies and incentives that address the drivers of biodiversity loss and promote sustainable and inclusive economic activities in line with multilaterally agreed norms and standards. It will assist countries in developing biodiversity-based economies as an important component of their national economic development that will ensure sustainability and equitable benefit sharing, and build social and environmental resilience.

67. UNEP will support countries in developing the necessary policies, legislation and strategies to make progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and implement their respective obligations under Multilateral Environmental Agreements while strengthening national institutions and mechanisms to monitor and report on related progress.

68. UNEP will promote social and behavioural change and support sustainable education and youth-led action with outreach campaigns and public engagement and by engaging with formal and non-formal education activities that shift knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and norms to address the indirect drivers of biodiversity loss and the degradation of nature. UNEP will also work with standard-setting and labelling schemes to promote and improve existing consumer information tools by including criteria of the effect of key products on biodiversity, in line with multilaterally agreed norms and standards.

69. UNEP will assist United Nations system entities in leading by example, meaning that they conduct their operations sustainably and disclose progress against key sustainability measures, including biodiversity performance metrics.

Outcome 2: Sustainable management of nature is adopted and implemented in development frameworks

70. UNEP will assist Member States and support United Nations country teams in ensuring that nature is mainstreamed effectively into all key sectors, using a well-coordinated, whole-of-government approach that balances the demands of different sectors. The establishment of clear, integrated and well-funded strategies and development plans, supported by rigorous legislation, can redress biodiversity loss. This generates overall policy coherence and public support towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the objectives of the agreed post-2020 global biodiversity framework. UNEP will play a key role in providing normative and analytical tools that assist United Nations country teams in mainstreaming policies



Oceans Advocate, Lewis Pugh, swims the Antarctic to call for more protected marine areas to preserve biodiversity.
Photo: UNEP / O. Nordel

and actions that reduce biodiversity loss and help implement ecosystem-based approaches to maintain ecosystem integrity.

71. UNEP will align its actions with the agreed objectives of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, without pre-empting its development, working with United Nations system entities and other partners to support countries in its implementation and mainstreaming it into national processes and development frameworks. UNEP support will capitalize on the organization's experience in boosting the financial and technical capacity of countries to fulfil their biodiversity commitments, including through the support of Global Environment Facility. This will enable countries to, for example, apply science-based approaches for the sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services and restore and protect the functional capacity and connectivity within and between freshwater, terrestrial and marine ecosystems. UNEP will also promote and reinforce ecosystem-based ocean governance based on the Regional Seas Programme and implement its organizational mandate as a custodian of several Sustainable Development Goals, assisting all Member States with protecting and restoring freshwater ecosystems and the wealth of freshwater biodiversity they contain.

72. UNEP will support policies and actions on sustainable consumption and production to conserve, restore and safely manage biodiversity and ecosystems. UNEP will support Member States, cities, business and consumers in the re-use, recycling and more efficient, less polluting use of products and materials that tend to have a strong impact on nature, including through a value chain approach and support for indigenous peoples and local communities.

73. UNEP will collaborate with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to support Member States in strengthening biodiversity and health linkages to manage and reduce risks for both human and ecosystem health and to integrate nature into national and international public health decision making through science-based approaches. In a post-pandemic context, this requires addressing nature degradation as a root cause of zoonotic disease and other novel biological introductions. Work on establishing more sustainable food value chains will be central to this effort, given that so many zoonoses are triggered by unsustainable patterns of food consumption and production. UNEP will also work with partners to strengthen the capacity of countries to implement the One Health approach, focusing on biosecurity measures, and to support the development and subsequent implementation of the Global Plan of Action on Biodiversity and Health. UNEP will also support efforts to mainstream biodiversity for health and nutrition.

74. UNEP will develop and promote frameworks and norms for biodiversity-related financing and infrastructure. By leveraging the enabling subprogramme portfolio on finance and economic transformation, UNEP will support the integration of biodiversity and ecosystem service considerations and related risks into financial and economic decision making. UNEP will provide guidance to governments and financial institutions to achieve positive outcomes for people and nature, in line with the agreed post-2020 global biodiversity framework and relevant environmental targets of the Sustainable Development Goals, focusing on economic sectors with a high impact and dependency on nature. UNEP will also support the development of innovative conservation funding mechanisms that support livelihood opportunities for indigenous peoples and local communities while building sustainability and resilience and strengthening their rights.

75. UNEP will promote the sustainability and transparency of value chains and production methods. It will be critical to ensure that resource extraction and commodity production contribute to healthy ecosystems and socially just outcomes.

UNEP will use opportunities to influence demand-side pressure on biodiversity and ecosystems through consumer information on the environmental footprint of products and by encouraging the adoption of sustainable consumption and lifestyles.

Outcome 3: Nature conservation and restoration are enhanced

76. UNEP will promote sustainable approaches to natural resource management. It will promote transformations in planning and managing land and water use and natural-resource-based value chains with a life-cycle perspective. Building on its experience and collaborative partnerships with agencies with specialized expertise, UNEP will assist Member States in promoting sustainable and resilient food systems, agriculture and fisheries to reverse unsustainable land use, biodiversity loss, habitat conversion, freshwater



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pollution, and abstraction and depletion of freshwater and ocean resources. Sustainable food systems must be based on the maintenance of healthy freshwater, terrestrial and marine ecosystems. UNEP will continue to assist Member States in strengthening the environmental performance of sustainable and restorative agriculture models through promotion of resource-efficient practices for nature, including but not limited to agro-ecology and regenerative agriculture, in collaboration with its partners. UNEP will enhance its contribution to these objectives by building on its work on, among other things, sustainable land use, natural capital accounting, sustainable consumption and production, landscape management and ecosystem restoration. UNEP will continue to support countries in restoring, sustainably using and conserving freshwater ecosystems to secure the provision of freshwater for the sustainable development of sectors and society. It will continue to support integrated coastal zone management and marine spatial planning and cooperate with relevant organizations. It will also continue to provide guidance for increased knowledge and institutional capacity to

implement equitable access and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources and catalyze action for the sustainable use of terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystem resources. There will also be a focus on adopting holistic sustainable consumption and production approaches, using indigenous and local knowledge, supported by sound science, data and statistics. This will be enabled and scaled up by public and institutional procurement policies and consumer choice.

77. UNEP will support sustainable habitat management through transformative processes and outcomes, including large-scale ecosystem restoration, complemented by social and behaviour change, to minimize damage to highly valued ecosystems, including damage from disasters, conflict and climate change. UNEP will support Member States' actions to prevent and mitigate ecosystem degradation to restore nature and build back resilience, including through ecosystem-based approaches to disaster risk reduction. For forest ecosystems, UNEP will work with partners and through networks on advancing and strengthening the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries as a platform for halting forest loss and degradation. Together with the FAO, UNEP will lead the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030 in marine, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems. For all freshwater ecosystems (lakes, rivers, wetlands, groundwater), UNEP will drive responsible, freshwater-inclusive decision making, using state-of-the-art tools and near-real-time data to elicit local watershed and transboundary action to protect freshwater biodiversity.

78. UNEP will provide the necessary tools and guidance to develop sustainable blue economies in freshwater, coastal and marine zones. It will also promote transboundary collaboration for the conservation, sustainable use and restoration of vulnerable ecosystems, such as coastal, mountain, lake, river and wetland ecosystems, particularly those vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and pollution. Further promotion of sustainable tourism through the One Planet network and the Global Tourism Plastics Initiative will scale up support for policies and practices that generate tourism revenue while maintaining the biodiversity and ecosystems that attract tourists.



Dumpsite in Croatia. Photo: UN Photo / E. Kanalstein

Chemicals and pollution action

79. Preventing, controlling and managing pollution is central to improving health, human well-being and prosperity for all. Good environmental quality and its positive implications for reducing inequity, ill health, poverty and vulnerability are powerful motivation for moving towards a pollution-free planet. A pollution-free planet would positively impact biodiversity and enhance the health of ecosystems by preventing further damage while increasing resilience. Addressing air pollution and waste is also linked to climate change mitigation, especially when action is taken against short-lived climate pollutants. Chemicals and waste can also be a resource for job creation through reuse as secondary materials. Accelerated action on chemicals and pollution will result in benefits for both nature and people and will be aligned with the beyond 2020 framework for sound management of chemicals and waste, as agreed on by Member States.¹⁷ Scaling up action on chemicals and waste also builds on UNEP experience in the development of large multi-focal-area projects funded under Global Environment Facility. A transition towards a pollution-free planet in line with the Sustainable Development Goals recognizes that, by 2025:

- a. the actions adopted in the agreed beyond 2020 framework for sound management of chemicals and waste are taken on board in national planning and development;
- b. 30 per cent of the world's population lives in areas where WHO Air Quality Interim Target 3 for outdoor PM_{2.5} (a fine particulate matter) is attained;¹⁸
- c. actions towards modifying economy-wide nitrogen use are in place to halve the losses of anthropogenic

¹⁷ <http://www.saicm.org/Beyond2020/IntersessionalProcess/tabid/5500/Default.aspx>.

¹⁸ The WHO Air Quality Guideline for outdoor air quality is set at a level intended to be protective of human health. For countries with high air pollution levels (<https://www.stateofglobalair.org/air>), there are three interim targets. The ambition is for the proportion of the world's population living in areas where interim Target 3 is attained 30 per cent by 2025, compared to 18 per cent in 2017.

- reactive nitrogen to the environment;¹⁹ and
- d. the capacity of countries to achieve Sustainable Development Goal targets 6.3, 12.3, 12.4 and 14.1 is strengthened.²⁰

80. The expected 2030 outcome of this UNEP subprogramme is that significant progress is made towards a pollution-free planet, particularly through the delivery of the *Towards A Pollution-Free Planet Implementation Plan*.

81. The chemicals and pollution action subprogramme will operate through the following principles.

- a. **Recognizing that sustainable consumption and production and sound chemicals and waste management are intrinsically linked and mutually interdependent:** UNEP will support the design and implementation of policies and business practices that reduce harmful chemicals in products and processes. It will also enable consumers to make informed choices about products and related waste. This is in recognition of the importance of adopting resource-efficient and sustainable production practices and avoiding the reintroduction of, or exposure to, toxic materials to the value chain or the environment. Sustainable consumption and production results in lower throughputs of materials, less waste and lower health risks.
- b. **Working through partnerships towards a pollution-free planet:** UNEP will maintain a strong focus on addressing various pollution streams and leveraging collaboration with partners, including the Global Environment Facility secretariat, and the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (the Minamata Convention on Mercury, the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions and the Montreal Protocol). UNEP will work through global, regional and subregional networks, forums and coalitions focused on pollution reduction, such as the Climate and Clean Air Coalition, antimicrobial resistance through the One Health alliance, and regional ministerial forums on health and the environment. UNEP will collaborate with other United Nations entities – including WHO, the FAO, the United Nations Children's Fund and UNDP – and other organizations, including the World Bank, the World Trade Organization and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, scientific institutions, national agencies,

¹⁹ As per the Colombo Declaration on Sustainable Nitrogen Management, which followed the adoption of Environment Assembly resolution 4/14 on sustainable nitrogen management.

²⁰ Sustainable Development Goal indicator 6.3.1: Proportion of domestic and industrial wastewater flows safely treated; indicator 12.3.1: (a) food loss index; and (b) food waste index; indicator 12.4.1: number of parties to international Multilateral Environmental Agreements on hazardous waste, and other chemicals that meet their commitments and obligations in transmitting information as required by each relevant agreement; indicator 12.4.2: (a) hazardous waste generated per capita; and (b) proportion of hazardous waste treated, by type of treatment; and indicator 14.1.1: (a) index of coastal eutrophication; and (b) plastic debris density.

BY 2025

The actions adopted in the agreed beyond 2020 framework for sound management of chemicals and waste are taken on board in national planning and development.

30 per cent of the world's population lives in areas where WHO Air Quality Interim Target 3 for outdoor PM^{2.5} (fine particulate matter) is attained.

Actions towards modifying economy-wide nitrogen use are in place to halve the losses of anthropogenic-reactive nitrogen to the environment.

The capacity of countries to achieve Sustainable Development Goal targets 6.3, 12.3, 12.4 and 14.1 is strengthened.

TOWARDS A POLLUTION-FREE PLANET

non-governmental organizations, foundations, and the private sector to assist Member States in implementing pollution reduction efforts.

c. Recognizing that global and regional environmental agreements provide a collaborative framework for governance and time-bound actions:

While Multilateral Environmental Agreements are key to sound management of chemicals and waste, important implementation challenges remain, including: availability of data, information and knowledge; policy design; adequate legislation; implementation and enforcement capacity and compliance mechanisms; availability of infrastructure and accessible clean technologies; institutional and technical capacity; business and industry leadership; intersectoral collaboration and transboundary cooperation; and true-cost pricing. UNEP will support countries in developing the necessary policies, strategies and legislation to implement their respective obligations under the Multilateral Environmental Agreements while strengthening national institutions and mechanisms to monitor and report on related progress.

d. Responding to country priorities and needs to reduce and prevent pollution:

UNEP will assist in identifying the types and extent of pollution and offer remedial and preventive actions, highlighting the importance of investing in local and national pollution action, including through the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. UNEP will promote mutual learning and transfer of effective policies, good practices, experiences, initiatives and green technologies within and across countries and local contexts. UNEP will apply a gender lens to this work, supporting countries to ensure that their efforts to reduce and prevent pollution are gender-sensitive.

e. Working to support system-wide changes to address pollution:

UNEP will develop mechanisms to incentivize and redirect public and private finance and investments to cleaner economic activities by internalizing the costs of pollution in financial decisions and adopting public disclosure and pollutant release and transfer registers. UNEP will contribute to building circularity and the necessary preconditions, including the absence of toxic chemicals, across value chains. The sound management of chemicals and waste enables circular approaches in high-impact sectors²¹ by offering

the knowledge and experience of the chemicals and waste communities on the sound management of substances throughout their life cycle to develop innovative circular solutions and avoid regrettable substitutions. Recognizing the importance of the private sector in developing sustainable alternatives with a clear understanding of life-cycle impacts, UNEP will ensure a system-wide approach. UNEP will also promote end-of-life policies (such as extended producer responsibility) and promote and communicate to consumers the practices that keep products in the economy longer.

The chemicals and pollution action sub-programme will focus on UNEP's comparative advantage to achieve three 2025 outcomes

Outcome 1: Human health and environmental outcomes are optimized through enhanced capacity and leadership in the sound management of chemicals and waste

82. UNEP will promote sound science and information and knowledge sharing on chemicals, waste and pollution.

It will foster and facilitate access and sharing of up-to-date, credible and relevant information, data and statistics. This will enable better-informed actions to prevent and address pollution and its impacts and promote systemic shifts at all levels of governance and among consumers. UNEP will support countries in undertaking analysis and using tools to identify the most polluting economic sectors and products. It will work with partners to support countries in adopting pollutant release and transfer registers and linking them to the UNEP World Environment Situation Room.

83. UNEP will accelerate policy shifts towards the sound management of chemicals and waste.

It will support the design of science-based, integrated and coherent regulatory frameworks and policies, build on the polluter pays principle, and use life-cycle approaches. This will assist in strengthening implementation and effectiveness – taking advantage of environmental data insights as enabled by digital technologies – and significantly reducing the harmful effects of chemicals

²¹ Chemical-intensive industry sectors (based on the *Global Chemicals Outlook II*) (e.g., food and agriculture systems, extractives, transportation, building and construction, energy, electronics, pharmaceuticals and textiles).

of major public health concern.²² UNEP will support efforts to eliminate the production, distribution and trade of such chemicals and promote sound chemicals and waste management in accordance with the objectives of the chemicals and waste Multilateral Environmental Agreements. UNEP will align its actions with the agreed objectives and outcomes of the beyond 2020 framework for sound management of chemicals and waste as these are developed, supporting countries in their implementation and providing technical support on issues of concern, scientific data and information, and indicators, in line with Environment Assembly resolutions.²³ Sustainable consumption and production policies will be pursued, in alignment with the vision of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (10YFP) (A/CONF.216/5). UNEP will also support Member States and stakeholders in their efforts to prevent and mitigate environmental and health threats through the use of a One Health²⁴ approach.

84. UNEP will strengthen institutions and build capacity to act. It will support Member States with technical capacity and institutional strengthening, including implementation of cross-sectoral national chemical management regimes and integrated approaches to financing, through the promotion of knowledge and information sharing, policy support, rapid response support, tools and good practices. Integrated approaches through multi-sectoral engagement, especially of the health and environment sectors, will be supported at all levels and in close collaboration with relevant United Nations entities, including in the context of the UNEP COVID-19 response and future pandemic preparedness.

85. UNEP will raise ambition and leadership on sustainable and healthier living through advocacy, champions and UNEP's convening power. Taking into account lessons learned and experiences with the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, UNEP will leverage the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals and engage policymakers, youth, academia, civil society, financial institutions and the private sector to gain support for positive environmental change, reducing and preventing pollution and promoting sustainable, healthier living. UNEP, with partners, can reach millions through robust campaigns such as #BreatheLife, #CleanSeas, #BeatPollution and #TimeforNature, observance of the International Day of Clean Air for blue skies²⁵ and the New Plastics Economy Global Commitment.

²² https://www.who.int/ipcs/assessment/public_health/chemicals_phc/en/.

²³ E.g., Environment Assembly resolutions 4/8 and 2/7 on sound management of chemicals and waste and resolution 1/5 on chemicals and waste.

²⁴ <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/one-health>.

²⁵ <https://www.un.org/en/observances/clean-air-day>.

Outcome 2:

Waste management is improved, including through circular processes, safe recovery of secondary raw materials and progressive reduction of open burning and dump sites

86. UNEP will mainstream the 3Rs (reduce, reuse and recycle) and circular processes across waste flows while ensuring safe secondary raw materials recovery.

UNEP will identify innovative solutions to build circularity across resource- and chemicals-intensive industry sectors. It will work with companies, research institutions, the waste management sector, civil society groups, and other stakeholders, in accordance with the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, to offer alternatives to current linear economic models. It will also work with municipalities and development organizations to create local employment opportunities. It also involves mainstreaming pollution reduction and sound management of chemicals and waste into development and humanitarian action and helping relevant actors address environmental risk factors negatively affecting the health of the most vulnerable populations.

87. UNEP will support countries and stakeholders in reducing the use of materials, energy, water and agricultural inputs through the adoption of resource-efficient and circular approaches whenever possible.

Such approaches can reduce waste streams and improve secondary flows, provided these are free of toxins, while enabling resource access, affordability, availability and sustainability for all, resulting in job creation and improving community health and climate resilience.

88. UNEP will support efforts to identify and close open dumpsites, in partnership with entities such as the International Solid Waste Association and United Nations Human Settlement Programme, and encourage national and local efforts for mandatory waste collection and segregation at source.

89. UNEP will scale up ongoing efforts on greening waste and wastewater management infrastructure.

It will support governments at all levels in developing, implementing and complying with resilient and effective waste and wastewater management systems and sustainable infrastructure, including natural infrastructure.²⁶ Partners will include multilateral development banks, wastewater and solid waste management associations, and the private sector, and supporting action will include adopting ecosystem-based approaches and upstream solutions that promote circularity and can be monitored using key environmental, health and climate indicators.

²⁶ The term "natural infrastructure" refers to a strategically planned and managed network of natural lands, such as forests and wetlands, working landscapes and other open spaces, that conserves or enhances ecosystem values and functions and provides associated benefits to human populations.

Outcome 3: Releases of pollutants to air, water, soil and the ocean are reduced

90. UNEP will support the shift away from the generation, production and use of harmful chemicals that pose a risk to human health and the environment while promoting sound management of chemicals and waste in general. UNEP will continue working to minimize the adverse effects of such chemicals on human health and the environment, supporting the implementation of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements and the agreed beyond-2020 framework for sound management of chemicals and waste. UNEP, with partners, will aim to ensure that regulations, standards and policies are in place to facilitate the shift to safer alternatives. It will strive for the identification, phasing-out and sound management of chemicals in products and processes to reduce the risks to human health and the environment and minimize the waste and pollution generated. UNEP will increase and disseminate knowledge on chemicals of public health concern,²⁷ develop and implement methodologies and tools for tracking and controlling such chemicals and



UNEP helps prevent pollution, improving health and human well-being while safeguarding ecosystems and increasing their resilience to shocks.

support sectors in designing products and processes that are safer and cleaner, including through green and sustainable chemistry. Safe production processes and safeguards will benefit from fiscal instruments that reflect the polluter pays principle and correct for market failures.

91. UNEP will influence producer, procurement and investment decisions regarding chemicals use by fostering more informed consumer choices based on awareness of the environmental footprint of products consumed and used. Sustainable and responsible consumption choices will be aided by increased awareness, accurate and relevant information, and fiscal incentives, as well as by ensuring consumer engagement by providing reliable sustainability information. UNEP will work with governments and information providers (companies and standard-setting and labelling schemes) to increase the availability of

²⁷ https://www.who.int/ipcs/assessment/public_health/chemicals_phc/en/.

clear, reliable information on chemicals in products, contributing to consumer literacy, in line with multilaterally agreed norms and standards.

92. UNEP will support ongoing efforts to reduce in-country and transboundary air pollution. It will improve air quality monitoring and assessments and support air quality management plans and actions at the national and subnational levels, targeting specific sectors, including mobility, industrial operations, energy, waste and agriculture, while assisting countries in identifying related local health priorities and multiple benefits. Through regional monitoring networks and partnerships on air quality, UNEP will address the mitigation of short-lived climate pollutants that cause air pollution and climate change, thus promoting and scaling up integrated action towards achieving Paris Agreement targets. UNEP will work with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations inter-agency Global Plan of Action for Sustainable Energy Solutions in Situations of Displacement,²⁸ which aim to support access to clean energy for refugees and people displaced by conflict and environmental stresses, in particular women, to avoid the health impacts from inefficient cooking practices and lighting and the related unsustainable deforestation.

93. UNEP will scale up ongoing efforts to address land-based sources of freshwater and marine pollution, especially nutrients, chemicals and plastic and other forms of marine litter. Through the Global Partnership on Marine Litter, the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management, the Regional Seas Programme and relevant digital platforms, UNEP will support stakeholders in taking an evidence-based approach to identifying key sources, pathways and hazards, from source to sea and across product life cycles. Action on the most problematic products, sources and sectors will be prioritized through action plans on marine litter and nutrients. To address global plastic pollution, UNEP will engage all stakeholders in the plastics value chain in scaling up resource efficiency, sustainable materials management and circularity, by building political support and leadership for reducing and reusing plastics; supporting countries, cities and businesses in meeting their commitments and voluntary actions to tackle plastics pollution, including through legislative guidance; and raising awareness on innovative solutions, alternatives and new business models.

²⁸ <https://www.humanitarianenergy.org/what-is-the-gpa>.

Science-policy

94. Science is the foundation for any policy setting and for identifying potential solutions to the environmental challenges we face. The core mandate of UNEP is to keep the world environment situation under review and strengthen the interface between science and policymaking across the sustainable development agenda. The science-policy subprogramme delivers scientifically credible and unbiased data, information and knowledge and provides policy-relevant analysis and recommendations to catalyze and accelerate solutions and actions for the environment based on continuous global status and trends.

95. The science-policy subprogramme will focus on the following actions and interventions to underpin the achievements of the UNEP thematic subprogrammes.

a. Increasing the uptake of science for transformative action: UNEP will provide expertise on environmental matters, bringing the latest scientific evidence and multidisciplinary analysis on the state of the world environment and related trends to the attention of policy and decision makers at all levels and the public at large. UNEP will build the capacities of government and non-government actors at national and local levels to take up the latest scientific information to inform policy development and drive transformative and systemic actions on the challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution while pre-empting the rise of other environmental challenges. The subprogramme will reach beyond the environmental community and make the case for putting the environment at the centre of economic and social decision making.



UNEP delivers scientifically credible and unbiased data, information and knowledge and provides policy-relevant analysis and recommendations to catalyze and accelerate solutions and actions for the environment based on continuous global status and trends.

Through gender-responsive partnerships across all geographic areas, involving governments and non-governmental organizations, and the business and the citizen community, UNEP will aim to be a catalyst of systemic and transformative shifts that can drive progress towards the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda.

b. Providing authoritative science, delivered with greater coherence and integration: UNEP will continue to be an authoritative voice on the environment in the global scientific community, collecting, analyzing and synthesizing scientific data that speaks to the interconnected challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. The signature, policy-relevant scientific assessments of UNEP include its flagship *Global Environment Outlook* reports, the *Emissions Gap* and *Adaptation Gap* reports, the *Frontiers* reports, the *World Water Quality* assessment report and the *Global Resources Outlook*, *Global Waste Management Outlook* and *Global Chemicals Outlook* reports. UNEP will ensure these assessments complement and connect with the existing scientific literature to increase their impact and uptake in policymaking. To that end, UNEP will continue facilitating the Ad Hoc Global Assessments Dialogue,²⁹ involving the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, the International Resource Panel and the processes for the development of the *Global Environmental Outlook* and the *Global Sustainable Development Report*, among others. UNEP will add value to these processes by proposing systematic and integrated solutions to the challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, based on a systemic and trans-disciplinary analysis of their interconnections in relation to socioeconomic and equity issues. Through the mutual sharing of data and information, methods and tools, key findings and expertise, this process will suggest policy options to move from business as usual towards sustainability in a cost-effective manner. The dialogue will also contribute to the preparation and delivery of coherent and mutually reinforcing messages that can inform international negotiations and decisions in the framework of Multilateral Environmental

²⁹ The Ad Hoc Global Assessments Dialogue builds on Member States' request, in Environment Assembly resolution 4/23, on keeping the world environment under review: enhancing the United Nations Environment Programme science-policy interface and endorsement of the Global Environment Outlook, that the Executive Director of UNEP "continue to promote greater coherence and coordination of global assessments undertaken within the United Nations system and in cooperation with relevant international bodies and the secretariats of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements."



Climbing to an observation platform in the area of Danum Valley Field Center. Sabah, Malaysia.
Photo: CIFOR / G. Girard

Agreements and other internationally agreed frameworks, as well as global environmental platforms such as the United Nations Environment Assembly.

c. Closing the gap regarding the availability of environmental data is essential for assessing and reviewing progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and fostering synergies among the Multilateral Environmental Agreements:

UNEP will continue to measure and monitor countries' progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and other internationally agreed environmental goals, providing timely data analysis and early warnings for policy and decision makers. UNEP will contribute to easing the burden of country reporting on progress by building as much as possible on existing credible data and reliable baselines and by aligning its reporting requirements with the Sustainable Development Goals indicators. UNEP will facilitate open-access and inter-institutional data and information exchanges, including at the national, regional and subnational levels. Pursuing greater scientific collaboration with the global and regional Multilateral Environmental Agreements, as well as facilitating coordination and exchanges among the Multilateral Environmental Agreements themselves, while respecting their mandates, will allow for greater harmonization of country data and methodologies for tracking progress. It will also facilitate better analysis and comparability for decision making.

d. Digitizing scientific knowledge and democratizing availability while anticipating emerging issues through foresight and horizon scanning:

Digital tools and technologies can accelerate the integration of environmental analysis with social and economic data, as well as better equip decision makers at all levels to assess the effectiveness, relevance and impact of global environmental policies. To that end, the World Environment Situation Room will be an asset for UNEP intervention at the local, regional and international levels. In line with the aspirations of a new global environmental data strategy,³⁰ UNEP will continue to leverage the Situation Room as a leading global digital environmental platform for enabling governments, the public at large, as well as the broader United Nations system and particularly United Nations country teams,

³⁰ Through the ministerial declaration of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its fourth session, "Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production" (UNEP/EA.4/HLS.1), Member States committed themselves to supporting UNEP in developing a global environmental data strategy by 2025 in cooperation with other United Nations bodies.

to visualize the state and performance of the world environment underpinned by economic and social data. The Situation Room will draw on near-real-time maps supported by geospatial technologies and offer a public knowledge platform informed by in situ satellite and data modelling sources, as well as citizen science.

This system will measure the effectiveness of the pace and scale of the required policy transformations for the environment and enable the assessment of options for action. As part of the horizon-scanning and foresight process, the Situation Room will also contribute to tracking emerging environmental and human health risks, bringing these to the attention of governments for the purpose of prioritizing research informed by large-scale systematic analysis and taking political actions, including at the United Nations Environment Assembly and other forums.

- e. **Developing an inclusive science-policy interface that speaks to all:** An effective science-policy interface capable of catalyzing transformative policies and decisions must be supported by inclusive environmental and social advocacy. In this respect, UNEP intervention will focus on building the capacities of national and local

decision makers to manage and synthesize scientific knowledge and embed science in their decisions that drive action on climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. UNEP will pursue broad stakeholder engagement as a critical step in enhancing societal understanding, acceptance and uptake of its scientific analysis. Through platforms and networks such as the Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment, the International Resource Panel, the World Adaptation Science Programme and the One Planet network, among others, UNEP will serve as a knowledge broker that builds consensus around existing and emerging environmental issues. UNEP will be a facilitator that enables partnerships and joint action across stakeholders from the scientific and policy communities, with societal endorsement. Communication and advocacy will remain key tools to spur societal engagement. To that end, UNEP will communicate its scientific information in a language that is accessible to all and that can influence and stimulate inclusive decision making and environmental action at the appropriate scale and pace.

UNEP will contribute to climate stability by providing scientific information that measures progress towards carbon neutrality and resilience and assesses the potential and risks associated with the measures applied. It will compile, assess and communicate the latest climate-related scientific data and propose policy options to help public- and private-sector decision makers engage in ambitious climate actions in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement.

UNEP will make living in harmony with nature a reality by providing the scientific information and data needed to secure policies and actions for nature. Science will be the basis for justifying the uptake of such systemic policies, actions and solutions across all sectors to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem integrity in line with the targets and goals of the agreed post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

UNEP will take us towards a pollution-free planet by facilitating access to up-to-date, credible and relevant scientific information, data and statistics on chemicals, waste, and pollution. This will encourage systemic shifts towards less polluting outcomes at all levels of governance and in all relevant segments of society, including consumers, and inform the design and implementation of the necessary regulatory frameworks and policies.



Science-policy: a foundation

UNEP will put science at the centre of sound environmental governance. Access to the latest environmental information, horizon scanning and informed analysis of the interconnections between the three mutually reinforcing crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution will drive coherent, more system-level decision making towards more effective legal and institutional environmental frameworks at the national and regional levels, including the agreed post-2020 frameworks, and stronger human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment for all.

UNEP will ensure that sound science supports finance and economic transformations. It will triangulate science with the policy and business community to nudge finance and market systems towards sustainable shifts, advocate for the adoption of sustainable consumption and production patterns at all levels and accelerate societal changes towards more circular economic and business models.

UNEP will leverage digital transformations to digitize scientific knowledge and democratize its availability. It will capitalize on the World Environment Situation Room as the prime global digital platform for enabling governments and the public at large to visualize the state and performance of the world environment, drawing attention to new and emerging environmental issues and offering an analysis of the effectiveness and impact of existing environmental policies, underpinned by economic and social data.

Environmental governance

96. Environmental governance is the institutional and legal architecture needed to make environmental goals and commitments a reality. Supporting countries in developing and implementing environmental policies in an integrated manner and abiding by strong legal and institutional frameworks that effectively achieve environmental goals in the context of sustainable development at the global, regional and national levels is part of UNEP's core work. This subprogramme supports coherent decision making towards more effective legal and institutional frameworks that underpin the achievement of internationally agreed goals for climate, biodiversity and pollution in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

97. The environmental governance subprogramme will focus on the following actions and interventions to underpin the achievements of the UNEP thematic subprogrammes.

- a. Strengthening the transformative role of the United Nations Environment Assembly as the highest global environmental decision making body to deliver on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:** UNEP will continue to work closely with Member States, Multilateral Environmental Agreements secretariats, United Nations entities and United Nations major groups and stakeholders to ensure that environmental considerations, particularly those identified as emerging challenges by the United Nations Environment Assembly, are well reflected and integrated into relevant intergovernmental discussions at the international level. Through its regional offices, UNEP will provide robust support to regional environment ministers' meetings and facilitate sharing of inputs and coherent environmental messaging across the regional environment ministers' meetings, the regional forums on sustainable development, the United Nations Environment Assembly and the high-level political forum on sustainable development.



Supports countries in developing and implementing environmental policies in an integrated manner and promotes coherent decision making towards more effective legal and institutional frameworks that underpin the achievement of internationally agreed goals for climate, biodiversity and pollution in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

UNEP will also leverage its role as the secretariat and chair of the Environment Management Group to better mainstream environmental issues into the work of the United Nations system while helping to coordinate the group's environmental activities for maximum impact and efficiency.

- b. Amplifying impact across the global environmental agenda through enhanced cooperation with the Multilateral Environmental Agreements:** UNEP will enhance programmatic cooperation with the respective secretariats and governing bodies of the 15 Multilateral Environmental Agreements that it administers, as well as other global conventions, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, by developing practical tools and working methods to support coherent and effective implementation both within and across their thematic clusters at the international and national levels. In this context, in collaboration with other United Nations system organizations, UNEP will provide rigorous support for the development and implementation of the agreed post-2020 global biodiversity framework and the beyond-2020 framework for sound management of chemicals and waste. UNEP will continue to deliver on its mandate as an implementing agency of the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol, and will work closely with relevant stakeholders, partners and funding mechanisms, such as Global Environment Facility and the Green Climate Fund, to support countries and regions in implementing the Multilateral Environmental Agreements effectively.
- c. Supporting countries in identifying integrated approaches to the three dimensions of sustainable development, including the incorporation of environmental considerations into sustainable development planning:** In the spirit of paragraph 88 of the Rio+20 outcome document, *The Future We Want*, UNEP will support countries in building their legal and institutional frameworks and capacity to mainstream the environment into national planning and development processes. Particularly as the custodian agency for Sustainable Development Goal indicator 17.14.1, "Number of countries with mechanisms in place to enhance policy coherence of sustainable development", UNEP will work closely with countries, at their request, to promote integrated approaches and policy coherence for sustainable development that address the



Recyclers work at a recycling plant in Montevideo, Uruguay. Photo: Reuters / A. Staff

economic, environmental and social dimensions in a balanced manner. UNEP will assist countries in aligning their relevant national policies with the international goals of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements and the Sustainable Development Goals and their associated targets while providing advisory services, awareness-raising and support for data collection and environmental knowledge management.

- d. Supporting countries in building relevant capacity in environmental law and contributing to the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through the Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law (Montevideo Programme):** UNEP support will include results-oriented, gender-responsive and country-driven strategic activities to promote public participation, access to information and access to justice in environmental matters. Special focus will be placed on disaster and conflict-affected countries, including through actions that target the most vulnerable populations. In coordination with the national focal points for the Montevideo Programme, UNEP will provide enhanced and sustainable capacity-building support for key environmental law stakeholders, including judges, prosecutors and enforcement officers. UNEP will also produce guidance products, including national, regional and global analyzes and assessments based on robust environmental data. It will track and advance shared understanding and facilitate action on key emerging issues related to environmental law.
- e. Leading the United Nations system and supporting national governments, at their request, in the development and implementation of environmental rule of law:** UNEP has a clear mandate to lead the United Nations system in

supporting governments in the development and implementation of environmental rule of law.³¹ Under the Montevideo Programme, UNEP will promote information and data exchange, education, capacity building and technical assistance, with a view to strengthening national environmental governance systems, improving environmental rule of law and contributing to the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda at the international and national levels. As part of this support, UNEP will conduct biennial data-informed global assessments of environmental rule of law that will track and report on core elements of environmental rule of law, including laws and institutions, civic engagement, rights and justice.

- f. Advancing human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment:**³² A safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment is integral to full enjoyment of a wide range of human rights, including the rights to life, health, food, water and sanitation. It is therefore key to protecting and improving human

31 See UNEP Governing Council decision 27/9, on advancing justice, governance and law for environmental sustainability. The UNEP mandate on the rule of law and the means for UNEP to achieve it were strengthened through the adoption of Environment Assembly resolution 4/20 on the Fifth Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law (Montevideo Programme V).

32 The second Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law (Montevideo Programme II), which was adopted by UNEP Governing Council decision 17/25 of 21 May 1993, included the "further development of environmental rights" (Programme area H, activity (c)) as a concept for further consideration and development. The Fourth Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law (Montevideo Programme IV), adopted by UNEP Governing Council decision 25/11 of 20 February 2009, included human rights and the environment as an element of the programme. The Fifth Montevideo Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law (Montevideo Programme V), adopted by Environment Assembly resolution 4/20, includes a strategic activity to promote the recognition of the mutually reinforcing relationship between environmental law and the three pillars of the Charter of the United Nations.

lives, and particularly those of the poor and marginalized. In partnership with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and other actors, UNEP will support countries, at their request, and collaborate with the wider United Nations system to enhance the effective and inclusive promotion, protection and respect of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment,³³ including through the implementation of relevant Human Rights Council, General Assembly and Environment

Assembly resolutions.³⁴ This will support countries in upholding human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, while making continued progress towards realizing universal recognition of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

33 Human Rights Council resolution 37/8 of 22 March 2018, on human rights and the environment, adopted at the 37th session of the council, noted that more than 100 states had recognized some form of a right to a healthy environment in, inter alia, international agreements, their constitutions, legislation or policies.

34 Including Human Rights Council resolution 40/11 of 21 March 2019, on recognizing the contribution of environmental human rights defenders to the enjoyment of human rights, environmental protection and sustainable development, adopted at the 40th session of the council, as recalled by General Assembly resolution 74/146, adopted by the assembly on 18 December 2019; UNEP Governing Council decision 27/9 of 22 February 2013; Environment Assembly resolution 4/17 of 15 March 2019; and Environment Assembly resolution 4/20 of 15 March 2019.

UNEP will contribute to climate stability by promoting the environmental rule of law to help achieve the aims of the Paris Agreement. National governments will be supported through the promotion of information and data exchange, education, capacity-building and technical assistance, to strengthen national environmental governance systems and improve the rule of law, with the aim of fully implementing the Paris Agreement.

UNEP will make living in harmony with nature a reality by supporting countries in developing legislation that has impact. Countries will receive support in developing the necessary policies, legislation and strategies to implement their respective obligations under the Multilateral Environmental Agreements in a coherent manner while strengthening national institutions and mechanisms for monitoring and reporting on related progress. In this context, UNEP will provide guidelines and tools for effective implementation.

UNEP will progress towards a pollution-free planet by advocating for the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Countries will receive support in developing the necessary policies, legislation and strategies to implement their respective obligations under the Multilateral Environmental Agreements in a coherent manner. In this context, UNEP will provide guidelines and tools for effective implementation. The Montevideo Programme can accelerate policy shifts towards the sound management of waste, including marine litter, with a focus on the environment and health nexus. UNEP will continue to support human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment.



Environmental governance: a foundation

UNEP will use the science-policy interface to support strong environmental governance. National governance frameworks will be strengthened through the promotion of information and data exchange, education, capacity-building and technical assistance, to strengthen national environmental governance systems and improve the environmental rule of law based on proven scientific evidence.

UNEP will promote integration of the environmental dimension when supporting finance and economic transformations. Strengthening the environmental dimension of economic policy decisions will lead to enhanced coherence in approaches to sustainable development and the uptake of sustainable development in national planning and policymaking. It will also assist countries in drawing up and implementing effective policy, and enabling frameworks that cut pollution through cleaner economic activities that also reduce biodiversity loss.

UNEP will use digital transformations for coherent and inclusive environmental governance. UNEP will accelerate support for the scale-up of knowledge management and data reporting at the national level. This will support countries in the coherent implementation of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements and increase the understanding of the data linkages between climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution in the context of sustainable development, including as it pertains to human health.

Enabling subprogrammes

Finance and economic transformations

98. Shifting finance and business practices towards sustainable patterns of consumption and production – and towards reducing climate impacts, biodiversity loss and pollution – is crucial to realizing the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda. Important opportunities exist to decarbonize and manage resources more responsibly while also addressing sustainability, poverty, equity, employment, economic growth, security and health objectives. Three of the six One Planet network programmes are helping to create enabling environments and shift markets and preferences: sustainable public procurement, consumer information, and sustainable lifestyles and education. With digital technologies and connectivity, new ways for natural resources to support sustainable and inclusive rural and urban transformation are being tested and piloted. UNEP will build on and integrate its decades-long normative work on sustainable finance, the inclusive green economy and sustainable trade, consumption and production and will leverage the United Nations reform and its partnerships to take such initiatives to scale in countries in support of an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable post-COVID-19 recovery and environmental sustainability.

99. The finance and economic transformations subprogramme will focus on the following actions and interventions to facilitate the achievements of the UNEP thematic subprogrammes.

- a. Building on and integrating UNEP initiatives in support of inclusive green economies in countries:** Bringing together its many complementary initiatives, UNEP will assist countries in drawing up and implementing effective frameworks for sustainable consumption and production, including resource efficiency and circularity, and reflecting



UNEP promotes the shift of finance and business practices towards sustainable patterns of consumption and production – and towards reducing climate impacts, biodiversity loss and pollution to realize the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda.

them in relevant national plans and policies.³⁵ UNEP will support practices that reduce pollution and address drivers of biodiversity loss through cleaner, more resource-efficient economic activities that improve climate stability, reduce biodiversity loss and move economies and societies towards a pollution-free world. Activities will include support for re-purposing subsidies and fiscal and pricing reforms for sustainability and a transition to inclusive green economies, which will be implemented through United Nations country teams and partners.

- b. Supporting business models and policies for accelerating sustainable consumption and production, including through resource-efficient and circular approaches:**³⁶ UNEP and its networks, including the One Planet network, the Partnership for Action on Green Economy, the Green Growth Knowledge Platform and Global Opportunities for Sustainable Development Goals, will support countries, cities and businesses in accelerating a transition to value chains that are more circular, cleaner and more resource-efficient, among other pathways to accelerating sustainable consumption and production. This ranges from the extraction and use of natural resources to product design, sustainable management and circularity of material flows, creation of the right sustainability incentives and enabling of policy frameworks for circularity and sustainable materials, as well as business ideas for various industry sectors, such as construction and infrastructure. UNEP will use enabling tools, such as sustainable public procurement, education and consumer information, to influence behaviour and shift consumption, as well as underlying assessment methodologies, such as urban metabolism, circular jobs and life-cycle approaches, to identify new opportunities. These approaches can be adjusted to target and support small and vulnerable suppliers and markets, taking into consideration global, regional, national and local contexts. The digital ecosystem will be harnessed to maximize sustainability gains from the transformation and monitor its impacts, guided by data analytics using science and consumer-based approaches. Digital technologies can also ensure access to better choices, addressing sectoral hot-spots, nudges and incentives that can complement informed choices and increase information on efficient and resilient value chains. They can also help consumers identify and purchase goods and services that are more sustainable, more efficient and less polluting.

³⁵ See Environment Assembly resolution 4/1 on innovative pathways to achieve sustainable consumption and production.

³⁶ See Environment Assembly resolution 4/1.



Solar panel trees at Quranic Park in Dubai, UAE.
Photo: Reuters / S. Kumar

c. Accelerating the alignment of finance with sustainability objectives and policy priorities:

The UNEP Finance Initiative will work through its various normative initiatives, such as the Principles for Responsible Banking, the Principles for Sustainable Insurance, the Net-Zero Asset Owner Alliance and the Principles for Positive Impact Finance, to align banking, insurance and investment practices to support inclusive green economy transformations. UNEP will work with its partners to scale up its engagement with industry, business and investor communities to shift towards a greater sense of responsibility to people and the environment in high-impact sectors, such as extractives, infrastructure and agriculture. UNEP will seek to promote access to sustainable digital finance that is gender-responsive, including for micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises.

d. Supporting cities, infrastructure, buildings and construction in urban and peri-urban areas to become more resource efficient, circular and clean:

With the onslaught of COVID-19, cities and urban dwellers were fully exposed to their dependence on nature and their sometimes fragile value chains for bringing food and critical supplies, with the pandemic coming on top of a housing crisis and exacerbating existing inequalities.

The findings from the International Resource Panel – such as the Weight of Cities report – and the work of 10YFP will inform a systems approach aimed at transforming finance, governance, business models and key sectors in urban areas to increase their resilience to pandemics and other shocks and scarcities. UNEP will focus on more sustainable and resilient value chains in the food, buildings, mobility, extractives and energy sectors, and it will spur integrated approaches to planning and design, particularly in public and private infrastructure, connecting grey, blue and sustainable infrastructure.³⁷ In doing this, UNEP will work with the United Nations Human Settlement Programme in support of subnational governments, given their essential role in creating change and implementing policy decisions, as well as across all levels of government.

e. Catalyzing green investment for an inclusive and sustainable rural transformation in support of jobs and ecological resilience and restoration:

In the context of COVID-19 and other socioeconomic

³⁷ This will build on the GEF Sustainable Cities Impact Programme, with an integrated approach and emphasis given to circularity, ecosystem-based approaches through integrated planning and design, and greening of cities to enhance quality of life.

drivers, with many migrants returning to rural areas, ensuring ecosystem resilience and job opportunities to enable the absorption of the returnees will be critical. UNEP will work with other United Nations entities and its partners in government and industry to provide sustained long-term support for a sustainable recovery. It will use advanced tools to support restoration of degraded ecosystems and investment in nature for new job opportunities, biodiversity enhancement and climate mitigation and adaptation, as well as to support the transition to sustainable agriculture and food systems, and to enhance inclusive environmental governance for natural resource management more generally.

- f. **Providing inclusive wealth statistics to better inform the links between natural assets, poverty and inequality and thereby enhance the capacity of Member States to deliver on the 2030 Agenda (UNEP, 2018):** Poverty and inequality are likely to influence other trends in the post-pandemic world, as suggested in the latest report of the Secretary-

General on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (E/2020/57). Climate change and biodiversity loss, combined with the impact of the pandemic, will hit the poorest hard, aggravating existing disparities and pushing people below the poverty line. UNEP's work on inclusive wealth will support national statistics offices in their efforts to monitor the environmental dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals and develop a statistical infrastructure for inclusive wealth statistics, which will present an opportunity to explicitly define the recovery from COVID-19 in terms of sustainable development, linking to the aspirations of the Paris Agreement and the Beyond GDP³⁸ movement.

38 The Beyond GDP initiative is about developing indicators that are as clear and appealing as GDP, but more inclusive of environmental and social aspects of progress. See <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/04/beyond-gdp-is-it-time-to-rethink-the-way-we-measure-growth/>.

UNEP will contribute to climate stability by promoting business models and markets for decarbonization, adaptation and resilience. It will engage value chain actors in adopting energy- and resource-efficient solutions, advocate for financial alignments and disseminate consumer information tools to support sustainable lifestyles.

UNEP will make living in harmony with nature a reality by developing and advocating for sustainable finance and economic measures that redress biodiversity loss, promote consumption and production practices that reduce pressure on ecosystems and nature, and reflect the importance of the socioeconomic dimension of nature and biodiversity. It will promote the economics of biodiversity, identifying its value, its link to human health and the socially just outcomes of natural resource management.

UNEP will support countries in transitioning towards a pollution-free planet by promoting the internalization of the true costs of pollution in financial and economic decisions by public and private actors, to redirect finance and investments towards cleaner and safer economic activities, more responsible behaviour, healthier people and a healthier planet. It will recognize the intrinsic links and mutual interdependence of sustainable consumption and production and sound chemicals and waste management by adopting a system-wide value-chain approach to addressing pollution.



Finance and economic transformations: an enabler

UNEP will leverage the science-policy interface by drawing on robust and relevant science and data to enhance the understanding, acceptance and uptake of sustainable choices by actors along the value chain, including economic policymakers and the financial sector, and to inform public and private investment.

UNEP will leverage environmental governance frameworks, in partnership with non-state actors, to address support and strengthen the institutions that guide and shape market behaviour and promote coherent and integrated approaches to addressing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production. It will aim to mainstream aspects of sustainable finance and economics into sectoral, institutional, legal and regulatory frameworks.

UNEP will enhance its use of digitalization to make sustainable finance more accessible and better adapted to public and private users of all sizes and to bring footprint and life-cycle information to consumers, businesses and policymakers. It will also engage partners to reduce the environmental footprint of the information and communications technology sector. These actions will build on the recognition, in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, of the need to secure additional finance for the transition to sustainable consumption and production.

Digital transformations

100. Digitalization is sweeping the planet — changing our economy, society, institutions and even our humanity. However, this does not always happen in an inclusive, equitable or sustainable manner. The High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation (2019) reports that the digital transformation has implications for all 17 Sustainable Development Goals and their 169 targets,³⁹ while the World Economic Forum (2018) estimates that artificial intelligence alone has over 80 different applications for the environment, including through transforming traditional sectors and systems to address climate change, protect biodiversity and bolster human well-being.



UNEP integrates environmental and sustainability norms and goals into the global digital economy. It will use digital tools to accelerate and amplify impact across the three thematic subprogrammes and bring more transparency to our knowledge of the state of our planet.

101. UNEP has the responsibility to integrate environmental and sustainability norms and goals into the global digital economy.⁴⁰ It will therefore use digital tools to accelerate and amplify impact across its three thematic subprogrammes and bring more transparency to our knowledge of the state of our planet. In line with the Secretary-General's road map for digital cooperation (A/74/821), the Secretary-General's data strategy and the System-wide Road Map for Innovating United Nations Data and Statistics (CEB/2020/1/Add.1), UNEP will use digital entry points and digital ecosystems strategically to embed relevant

39 Of the 169 Sustainable Development Goal targets, 103 are directly influenced by a combination of seven digital technologies, including: digital access, fast Internet, cloud computing, Internet of things, artificial intelligence, extended reality and blockchains (GeSI and Deloitte, 2019).

40 In Environment Assembly resolution 4/23, on keeping the world environment under review, Member States recognized the existence of gaps in knowledge about the state of the environment resulting from a lack of current data and of information generation and dissemination, and they requested UNEP to develop and prioritize a long-term data strategy in support of the identification of comparable methods for data collection and analysis and promotion of their harmonization, and the improvement of platforms that provide a repository function to allow open access to up-to-date, quality-assured, credible and relevant data. Under that mandate, along with the other mandates provided in the resolution, UNEP has an institutional responsibility to integrate environmental and sustainability values and goals into the global digital economy.

environmental data and analytics into the work of the entire United Nations system. UNEP will also consider how to align the digital transformation subprogramme with the key recommendations of the Secretary-General's road map for digital cooperation.

102. The digital transformations subprogramme will focus on the following actions and interventions to facilitate the achievements of the UNEP thematic subprogrammes:

- a. Supporting and scaling up environmental change through an effectively governed and inclusive data architecture and digital ecosystem for the planet:** UNEP will contribute technical expertise to the development and consolidation of an open and inclusive global digital ecosystem for people and the planet based on digital norms and governance frameworks that integrate datasets and analysis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. Datasets from the public and private sectors will be used to produce actionable, real-time and predictive insights that will contribute to an automatic monitoring of global, national and local progress towards key climate, biodiversity and pollution targets for the Sustainable Development Goals and relevant internationally agreed frameworks, including the Multilateral Environmental Agreements. To the extent possible, these datasets will be published as digital public goods. In delivering this work, UNEP will complement and synergize with the work of other United Nations entities, providing analysis and guidance to help mitigate the direct environmental impacts of digital technology supply chains, energy requirements and e-waste, as well as addressing risks arising from misinformation on digital platforms. All these results will be achieved by leveraging the science-policy subprogramme, especially UNEP work on statistics and Sustainable Development Goal indicator monitoring and the World Environment Situation Room, in line with the aspirations of the global environmental data strategy and the Secretary-General's data strategy.
- b. Catalyzing a transformative use of environmental digital public goods to amplify and accelerate progress towards global climate, biodiversity and pollution goals and targets:** UNEP will aim to catalyze and inspire actions, investments and partnerships that use digital public goods and digital technologies to achieve greater efficiency, effectiveness and transparency in advancing internationally agreed climate, nature and pollution goals and targets, as well as innovations in decarbonization, dematerialization and detoxification. This will include partnerships with public- and private-sector actors to harness data, digital technologies and computational sustainability to amplify and accelerate deeper

structural transformations to drive markets, value chains, consumer behaviours and decision making towards achieving sustainable outcomes.

c. Strengthening environmental digital literacy and e-governance capacities of diverse stakeholders to engage in the environmental dimensions of digital transformation, with an emphasis on the Global South:

This investment is a prerequisite for stakeholders to effectively design and deploy digital technologies and related digital transformation policies to solve climate, biodiversity and pollution challenges and support the nexus of environment, digital technology and e-governance. To that end, UNEP will work through partnerships to enhance the environmental digital literacy and e-governance capacities of diverse stakeholders by building inclusive, gender-responsive and human-rights-based digital capacity, facilitating policy dialogue, enhancing education curricula and fostering social, innovative collaboration, and the development of new communities of practice that can contribute to closing the digital divide. Upon request,

UNEP will assess the national digital infrastructure needed to produce digital public goods for the environment and to support e-government services. UNEP will also seek to inspire and catalyze citizen science, open innovation and social collaboration through various digitally oriented challenges, hackathons, conferences, innovation labs, impact hubs, moonshots and other competitions. Specific focus will be placed on supporting small- and medium-sized enterprises, social entrepreneurs, women, indigenous peoples, youth and underrepresented stakeholders.

d. Improving institutional efficiency and impact through a digitally enabled UNEP: UNEP will integrate a range of digital technologies, processes and practices into all areas of the organization to improve the way in which it operates, innovates, delivers value, engages with stakeholders and builds capacity. UNEP will strive to become a digital organization that treats data as a strategic asset that can drive insights, innovations and impact, including through better project design, implementation and impact evaluation.

UNEP will contribute to climate stability by accelerating the adoption of low-carbon behaviours and products by consumers and citizens. Digital solutions will drive sustainable lifestyles and the consumption of low-carbon goods and services through increased carbon emissions transparency. UNEP will communicate carbon footprint information through certifications, digital applications and e-commerce platforms. It will also scale up efforts to reduce the carbon footprint of the information and communications technology sector, focusing on data centres, blockchain applications and the gaming sector.

UNEP will make living in harmony with nature a reality by accelerating and scaling up the development and adoption of sustainable technologies to support the conservation, sustainable use and equitable sharing of the benefits of biodiversity. It will convene and accelerate partnerships to take up emerging digital technologies that can help society achieve nature and biodiversity goals. In addition, UNEP will stimulate a digital network on the status of nature and biodiversity, including trends, pressures and human responses, as a digital public good, to inform public and private decision making. Mitigating the impact on nature of value chains linked to information and communications technologies will also be explored.

UNEP will amplify the adoption of clean technologies and digitalized circular approaches towards a pollution-free planet. It will explore the significant potential of digital technologies and circular design to contribute to reducing waste and pollution. Likewise, the adoption of chemicals and pollution monitoring and data-sharing standards throughout the product life cycle can support transparency in materials traceability, from raw materials through production and consumption to disposal or reuse. Finally, UNEP will support global efforts on the challenge of e-waste, emphasizing the need for circular approaches to dealing with electronic goods.



Digital transformations: an enabler

UNEP will accelerate the science-policy interface through increased influence, uptake and impact of digital public goods produced by scientific analysis on environmental priorities. It will contribute to global environmental data principles, safeguards, standards and norms to underpin an open data infrastructure and a digital ecosystem for the planet. UNEP will use digital tools to conduct science-based analysis of environmental trends in climate, nature and pollution and monitor progress in the achievement of the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals and the implementation of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements. Customized environmental data and analysis will be made available to the wider United Nations system through the World Environment Situation Room.

UNEP will strengthen global and national capacity to digitalize environmental governance and collective action. This includes contributing to global principles, standards and norms on open data, inter-operability and licensing, data quality assurance, human-centred design and safeguards for public-private partnerships. UNEP will support the digital literacy of environmental stakeholders, including through digital challenges, moonshots and hackathons. There will be a specific focus on supporting small- and medium-sized enterprises, social entrepreneurs, women, indigenous peoples, youth and underrepresented stakeholders that suffer from the digital divide.

UNEP will accelerate finance and economic transformations with digital public goods and insights informing sustainable investments. Digital public goods will enable the design of inclusive green economy policies and help in the assessment of environmental risks, insights and natural capital accounting to inform investment decisions. UNEP will support the public disclosure of information and tracking of value chain performance using standard environmental-social-governance investing criteria. It will also seek to use digital technologies to support sustainable consumption and sustainable lifestyles, including through the application of behavioural economics.

GLOBAL FESTIVAL
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FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

ACTION
CAMPAIGN

**Four levers
of change for
better delivery**



Photo: Visualhunt/SDG Action Campaign

103. To enhance the delivery of the transformational systemic shifts outlined in this Medium-Term Strategy, UNEP will address four key levers of change.

These represent a combination of internal and external actions and opportunities that will drive UNEP toward greater effectiveness while accelerating impact.



Multilateral Environmental Agreements and their “multiplier effect”

104. The Multilateral Environmental Agreements are one of the foundation stones of national policymaking and the work of UNEP, and they play an indispensable role in implementing the 2030 Agenda and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Recognizing and respecting the autonomy of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements, UNEP will promote coherent and synergized cooperation across all the Multilateral Environmental Agreements to increase their impact and deliver enhanced results across the 2030 Agenda.⁴¹ UNEP will continue to support Member States in the implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreement decisions and, in this context, will facilitate a coherent and integrated approach to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, brokering cross-

⁴¹ Paragraph 89 of “The future we want” recognizes the need to “enhance synergies promote policy coherence at all relevant levels and enhance coordination and cooperation among the Multilateral Environmental Agreements” in the chemicals and waste cluster, as well as in the biodiversity cluster and within the broader United Nations system. The Environment Assembly also recalled this paragraph in its resolution 2/17, on enhancing the work of the United Nations Environment Programme in facilitating cooperation, collaboration and synergies among biodiversity-related conventions, which, among other things, mandated UNEP to strengthen coherent system-wide action on capacity-building for facilitating coherent and effective implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions.

UNEP will strive to maintain a high level of global environmental multilateralism, focusing on current challenges, including climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, along with opportunities and emerging needs. UNEP will demonstrate that a networked and inclusive multilateralism is fundamental to discovering and implementing lasting solutions to global challenges.

institutional cooperation and partnerships, creating the required policy instruments and legislation and developing related capacities.

105. The relationship between UNEP and the Multilateral Environmental Agreements will continue to be underpinned by regular dialogue and joint messaging and advocacy – and informed by mutual

exchanges of science-based data and holistic assessments for increased strategic and programmatic cooperation – towards common goals. Stronger focus will be placed on cross-cutting areas, such as sustainable consumption and production, climate change, biodiversity and pollution and human rights, including the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, as well as on issues of intergenerational equity and gender equality.

106. The post-2020 frameworks for biodiversity and chemicals and waste will provide key guardrails.

Central to UNEP engagement with the Multilateral Environmental Agreements will be continued support for the agreed post-2020 global biodiversity framework and the beyond-2020 framework for sound management of chemicals and waste, along with leveraging of linkages and integrated approaches with the Paris Agreement.



Raising environmental ambition within the United Nations system through United Nations reform

107. The United Nations reform process aims to reposition the United Nations development system with a stronger, better-defined collective identity as a trusted and effective partner to countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda.

By reducing systemic fragmentation, duplication and operational inefficiencies, the reform presents a tremendous opportunity for UNEP to commit to its role as the leading environmental voice in the United Nations and fulfil its coordination mandate on the environment within the United Nations system more effectively through its array of regional policy and operational assets.

108. UNEP will approach the United Nations reform through the unified thematic lens of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution while strengthening integration across all aspects of the United Nations mission, including on development, peace and security,

humanitarian operations and human rights, within the mandate of UNEP.

109. To better leverage the opportunity offered by the reform, UNEP will review its operational arrangements and processes to ensure that they are aligned with the reform guidelines, tools, mechanisms and digital requirements. UNEP will strengthen staff capacity across the organization to contribute substantively by identifying opportunities and applying adaptive management methods to implementing the United Nations reform at all levels.

110. UNEP will foster impact-oriented partnerships with its United Nations sister entities, drawing on their respective strengths and capabilities to improve United Nations system-wide operational coherence. This will offer unique policy and operational opportunities to leverage the technical and operational expertise of other entities for greater joint impact, while amplifying UNEP programme delivery.

UNEP will approach the United Nations reform through the unified thematic lens of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution to enhance its guiding role, raise ambition and accelerate and scale up progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

111. UNEP regional offices will be the anchor for delivering the organization's strategic aspirations and securing stronger engagement at the regional and country levels. They will serve as conduits of UNEP alignment with the United Nations reform guidelines and processes, securing a better understanding of and responsiveness to national and regional contexts and needs, as well as enhanced engagement with United Nations resident coordinators and peace operations and stronger collaboration with United Nations country teams, the regional Development Coordination Office and the regional economic commissions. In contributing to the design and implementation processes for common country analyzes and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, UNEP will ensure that science informs policy. Decisions from these joint processes will inform the organization's own programme planning and implementation at the country level and its modalities for engagement in the work of the United Nations country teams. UNEP will support countries in ensuring due consideration of environmental matters

in their voluntary national reviews in a feedback loop between country-level, regional and global environmental priorities.

112. UNEP will participate actively in regional platforms and processes such as the regional collaborative platforms, opportunity- and issue-based coalitions, regional knowledge platforms and other joint United Nations platforms. UNEP will secure stronger engagement in these platforms while leading environment-related opportunity/issue-based coalitions and providing strategic support to regional ministerial environmental forums, inter-ministerial committees and forums for joint ministers' meetings. UNEP will draw linkages between the decisions of these forums and its own programme planning and implementation and will foster synergies between the forums and the Environment Assembly, as well as with the regional forums for sustainable development.

113. UNEP will contribute to key intergovernmental and inter-agency coordination mechanisms. By providing evidence-based environmental information and raising public awareness of critical and emerging environmental issues, UNEP will influence global environmental policymaking under the global intergovernmental processes and deliberations of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Human Rights Council and the Security Council (where mandated to do so), among others. At the inter-agency level, UNEP, as chair of the Environment Management Group, will enhance United Nations system-wide coordination related to specific issues in the field of the environment, harnessing the Environment Management Group's collective capacity to develop transformational responses for a more sustainable world, including in a post-COVID-19 scenario. UNEP will also support the integration of environmental sustainability into policy, programme and operational guidance within the United Nations system by engaging in the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and other ad hoc processes and by supporting the dissemination of their decisions and guidance tools through regional and country mechanisms.

114. UNEP will advance the United Nations system corporate environmental performance, supporting the delivery of the Strategy for Sustainability Management in the United Nations System 2020-2030 (CEB/2019/3/Add.2) and its follow-up process through upgraded reporting, coordination and technical assistance, including through partnerships with sister entities. In the spirit of delivering as one, UNEP will continue to generate knowledge and advocate for, and

curate the creation of, a support system that will feed into and enhance the United Nations leadership's vision for corporate sustainability, including through improved partnerships with the United Nations and other international organizations.



Inclusive multilateralism for stronger global environmental governance

115. UNEP will value and uphold inclusivity to promote transparent and accountable environmental governance at all levels. In today's rapidly changing environment, UNEP will strive to maintain high ambition in global environmental multilateralism, focusing not only on current challenges and opportunities but also on emerging needs, particularly those of future generations, and the need for digital cooperation on global environmental issues.

116. UNEP will build an inclusive environmental multilateralism to mobilize all those who can influence the changes needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Nearly 30 years after its adoption at the 1992 Earth Summit, Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development – one of the cornerstones of stakeholder engagement in environmental policy and decision making – remains as relevant as ever.⁴² Powerful young voices within a revamped worldwide environmental movement have shown the power of committed individuals to influence decisions on planetary justice. In commemorating the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Charter of the United Nations, the Secretary-General stressed

UNEP will strive to maintain high ambition in global environmental multilateralism, focusing on current challenges, opportunities and emerging needs, as well as digital cooperation on environmental issues.

⁴² Principle 10 reads: "Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, everyone shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided."

the need for "an inclusive multilateralism, drawing on the indispensable contributions of civil society, business, cities, regions and, in particular, with greater weight given to the voices of youth" (United Nations Secretary-General, 2020b). UNEP will leverage these new-found societal commitments to engage in strategic partnerships with major groups and stakeholders⁴³ and the public at large, benefiting from their effective technical and advocacy functions. As part of this engagement, UNEP will continue to promote faith-based organizations and communities as custodians of far-reaching, value-based perspectives on environmental sustainability that speak to billions of people around the world.

117. UNEP will leverage the United Nations Environment Assembly – the world's highest-level decision making body on the environment – as the primary global platform for environmental action. Environment Assembly sessions serve as an opportunity for the international community across all sectors, levels of government and walks of life to come together to discuss and address global environmental issues. Driven by sound science, the Environment Assembly will continue to inspire, identify and capture bold transformative actions for the environment while focusing on solutions that speak to all. UNEP will support the Environment Assembly in enhancing its relationship with the Multilateral Environmental Agreements and its contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, by strengthening convergence and dialogue on common strategic actions and shared experiences and providing increased visibility to the decisions of the governing bodies of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

118. UNEP will support stronger engagement with the private sector as a key partner in driving systemic shifts to sustainable pathways. Building on its strategy for private-sector engagement (UNEP, 2020b), UNEP will engage the private sector in significant shifts that will result in the generation of sound policies and sustainable technologies, including digital technologies, informed by state-of-the-art scientific knowledge. UNEP will interact with the private sector at various levels, including through open networks, policy discussions and multi-stakeholder forums such as the United Nations Environment Assembly, as well as on specific applications of digital technologies for the environment. Through partnerships and alliances

⁴³ Agenda 21 recognized that sustainable development requires the meaningful involvement and active participation of the following nine "major groups": business and industry, children and youth, farmers, indigenous peoples, local authorities, non-governmental organizations, the scientific and technological community, women, and workers and trade unions.



Protest against the use of plastic, Ggaba Beach, Uganda.
Photo: UNEP / S. Foote

with the private sector, UNEP will target specific objectives and engage in high-impact advocacy actions to promote the policy and cultural shifts needed to orient producers and consumers towards sustainability. Key sectors where UNEP will strive to achieve such systemic shifts include energy production and consumption, food systems, infrastructure and the built environment, chemicals and waste management, the extractive sector, sustainable value chains for less resource- and pollution-intensive products, global financing, and market and investment systems.



Innovative communication as a driving force for empowered environmental advocacy

119. UNEP communications will help deliver coherence and consistency across the broad spectrum of environmental action. Communication efforts will be informed by the latest available science, including social science, and will be aimed at shaping the global narrative around the environment by generating political and social commitments and bringing about the societal and policy changes required to tackle the challenges outlined in the situational analysis section of this document.

UNEP communications will help deliver coherence and consistency across the broad spectrum of environmental action to spur societal engagement and stimulate inclusive decision making and environmental action.

120. UNEP will take a highly innovative approach to its communications, using its growing foothold in digital spheres and social media spaces to reach and engage with an expanding range of audiences and stakeholders. UNEP will focus on empowering individuals and groups for environmental action, placing emphasis on voices from sectors and actors typically outside the environment space. UNEP will amplify the voices of youth, consumers, environmental entrepreneurs, activists, innovation leaders and faith-based actors and organizations, among others.

121. UNEP will focus on delivering high-impact stories to enhance the understanding of environmental sustainability and its benefits and to mobilize societal behavioural change. By using innovative practices of storytelling, including immersive digital technologies, UNEP will highlight and share case studies on nexus issues and the linkages between the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainable development. These lessons will be adapted to local contexts and scales.

Non-profit group SeaWomen of Melanesia, 2021's Champion of the Earth for Inspiration and Action, chart the health of the fragile coral reefs that surround Melanesia, a grouping of island nations in the South Pacific.
Photo: UNEP / R. Paul

Looking forward: driving change towards the future we want



122. Achieving climate stability, living in harmony with nature and moving towards a pollution-free planet by 2050 will require a recalibration of our economies and societies towards more sustainable and equitable models.

Based on the latest science, this strategy provides the focus needed for transformative actions that target the drivers of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. It sets out the actions needed to reshape consumption and production patterns for sustainability, so that human well-being and the health of the planet's ecosystems are no longer threatened by a deteriorating environment.

123. This strategy sets out a focused and cohesive path for UNEP to curate solutions that can contribute to achieving the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda and implementing paragraph 88 of *The Future We Want* (A/RES/66/288),

guided by a long-term vision of planetary sustainability for people, prosperity and equity. UNEP will leverage the Decade of Action and help Member States deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals by

being a catalyst and facilitator of ambitious action on climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. UNEP will employ clarity and focus to deliver efficient and effective programmes, for tangible and sustainable results.

124. UNEP will not embark alone on the journey charted by this strategy.

It will leverage the United Nations development system reform to engage the wider United Nations system in stronger, more coordinated and mutually supportive environmental action while solidifying its ability to meet individual country needs. UNEP will engage with the Multilateral Environmental Agreements to amplify their impact and bring about more coherence in how they cooperate and benefit from each other. UNEP will operate on the basis of an inclusive multilateralism that reaches beyond governments and supports systemic shifts, with the help and collaboration of the private sector and business community, youth, civil society at large and faith-based organizations.

125. This is how UNEP will drive the change towards the future we want.

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