



Distr.: General
23 March 2016

English only



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

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

Nairobi, 23–27 May 2016

Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

**International environmental policy and
governance issues**

**Implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy
review of operational activities for development of the
United Nations system**

Note by the Executive Director

Summary

The present note provides information on the follow-up to General Assembly resolution 67/226 of 21 December 2012. It provides a summary of results published by the United Nations Development Group and highlights the achievements of the United Nations Environment Programme in mainstreaming environmental sustainability. It also presents information on the related Economic and Social Council dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the United Nations development system to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and on some of the principles and strategic actions being considered in this regard.

* UNEP/EA.2/1.

I. Introduction

1. General Assembly resolution 67/226, on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for the development of the United Nations system, emphasized the importance attached by Member States to enhanced system-wide coherence as a strategy for improving the effectiveness of the whole United Nations development system.
2. At the heart of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) medium-term strategy for the period 2014–2017 are objectives of greater efficiency, greater transparency and the enhanced use of performance information for improved management and decision-making. In setting out the programmes of work for the bienniums 2014–2015 and 2016–2017, UNEP took into account the quadrennial review recommendations for improving United Nations effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and impact on development. UNEP is paying particular attention to ways in which it can leverage further impact through development cooperation and country-level modalities of the United Nations system, including by increasing its participation in United Nations country teams. Capacity-building and the facilitation of technology development and sharing in countries underpin the delivery of all UNEP support to countries.

II. UNEP contribution to United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and joint programming

3. There is strong intergovernmental recognition of the United Nations “Delivering as one” model, although it remains a voluntary nationally led option, in deliberations on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and during the Economic and Social Council’s operational activities for development segment meetings, as well as at meetings of the executive boards of United Nations funds and programmes. As of November 2015, a total of 52 countries had formally requested the United Nations to adopt the “Delivering as one” approach to their development assistance, up from 37 countries in 2014. Throughout its programmes of work, UNEP articulates its planned engagement in operational activities for development in each of its subprogrammes.
4. UNEP has, through two projects entitled “Integrating Environmental Sustainability in the UNDAFs and UN Common Country Programming Processes”, increased its participation in the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) since 2010. At the country and regional levels, UNEP has supported the integration of the environmental dimension primarily through the activities of the regional development coordinators in five UNEP regional offices (Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and West Asia), assisted by the Regional Support Office in Nairobi and the New York Office.
5. UNEP provides customized support to United Nations country teams for the integration of environment issues into the UNDAFs at the country, regional and global levels. At the country level, UNEP provides capacity-building support through training of United Nations country teams on the environmental sustainability programming principle; provides environmental data and information to inform UNDAF priority setting through national environmental summaries and contributions to the common country analyses; provides technical support upon request and participates in strategic prioritization retreats; and provides technical support and direct contributions through the development and implementation of joint programmes.
6. At the regional level, UNEP provides capacity-building support through training of United Nations country teams, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Group, on the environmental sustainability programming principle; provides environmental data and information to inform UNDAF priority setting through UNEP regional environment outlooks; provides technical assistance to the United Nations country teams, including undertaking UNDAF desk reviews; and participates in and/or (co)leads regional thematic working groups, peer support groups, quality support and assurance mechanisms and teams of regional directors. At the global level, UNEP provides inputs to the United Nations Development Group task teams (including co-leading the programme working group) on the environmental dimension of sustainable development; participates in strategic meetings and training; and contributes to the development, updating and upgrading of UNDAF training materials related to the environmental dimension of sustainable development.

7. In connection with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UNEP has contributed to the preparation of a new UNDAF programming guidance document. The new guidance has three core principles that guide the design and implementation of UNDAFs: upholding human rights, addressing inequalities and leaving no one behind; sustainability, reducing environmental risks and increasing resilience; and accountability, capturing the main tenets of the 2030 Agenda and ensuring that the core norms and mandates of the United Nations continue to drive the country-level work of UNEP. The sustainability principle addresses more broadly the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

8. From 2007 through December 2015, UNEP supported the mainstreaming of the environment into 109 United Nations common country frameworks in 120 countries. The following table lists the United Nations common country frameworks that UNEP has supported since 2014 through the above-mentioned UNDAF processes.

UNEP support to United Nations country teams for common country planning processes, by region	2014	2015
Africa	Burkina Faso Chad Côte d'Ivoire Ethiopia Kenya Mali Mozambique Niger Rwanda Tunisia Uganda	Angola Benin Botswana Burkina Faso Burundi Côte d'Ivoire Eritrea Ethiopia Gambia Guinea Kenya Madagascar Mali Mauritania Morocco Mozambique Rwanda Sao Tome and Principe Seychelles South Africa Tunisia Uganda United Republic of Tanzania Zimbabwe
Asia and the Pacific	Bhutan Cambodia China Indonesia Lao People's Democratic Republic Malaysia Maldives Thailand	Bhutan Cambodia East Timor Indonesia Lao People's Democratic Republic Mongolia Thailand Viet Nam
Europe	Albania Azerbaijan Belarus Bosnia and Herzegovina Kazakhstan Moldova Serbia Turkey Turkmenistan Ukraine	Albania Azerbaijan Belarus Bosnia and Herzegovina Georgia Kazakhstan Montenegro Ukraine

UNEP support to United Nations country teams for common country planning processes, by region	2014	2015
Latin America and the Caribbean	Argentina	Antigua and Barbuda ^a
	Brazil	Argentina
	Colombia	Barbados ^a
	Ecuador	Belize
	El Salvador	Brazil
	Guatemala	Colombia
	Mexico	Costa Rica
	Nicaragua	Cuba
	Panama	Dominica ^a
	Paraguay	Dominican Republic
	Uruguay	Ecuador
		El Salvador
		Grenada ^a
		Haiti
		Honduras
		Mexico
		Nicaragua
		Panama
		Peru
	Saint Kitts and Nevis ^a	
	Saint Lucia ^a	
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines ^a	
	Trinidad and Tobago ^a	
	Uruguay	
West Asia	Iraq	Iraq
	Jordan	Jordan
	Kuwait	Kuwait
	United Arab Emirates	Lebanon
	State of Palestine	Saudi Arabia
		Syrian Arab Republic
		State of Palestine

^a Subregional UNDAF of Barbados and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States.

III. Alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

9. In September 2015, world leaders adopted United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/1, entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” – a plan of action for people, the planet and prosperity. It is transformative, universal, rights-based and integrated, and its implementation calls for a much more transformative and collective engagement by all stakeholders, including Governments, parliaments, the scientific and academic communities, civil society, the private sector, the international community and the United Nations system.

10. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2015/15, requested all entities of the United Nations development system to ensure consistency and alignment with the post-2015 development agenda, once adopted, in the context of midterm reviews and the elaboration of strategic plans and frameworks.

11. The United Nations Development Group has called, in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, for a transformative and collective engagement by all stakeholders – Governments, parliaments, scientific and academic communities, civil society, the private sector and the United Nations system. It suggested the following core principles of collaboration to guide the system's support to national-level implementation:

- (a) *Country-led, evidence-based and results-focused approaches*: Country needs and national capacity will determine the support United Nations country teams provide, which will be underpinned by robust and collaborative approaches on data and analysis;
- (b) *Integration*: The United Nations system has a collective responsibility to advocate for and act on an integrated approach to sustainable development – through multisectoral approaches; across the development, humanitarian, human rights, and peace and security pillars; across normative and operational aspects of the United Nations system's work; and in the way United Nations country teams operate together;
- (c) *Expertise, not exclusivity*: No single entity can claim an exclusive mandate over any single goal or for all targets within a goal. An entity should offer – and be accountable for – its expertise to work towards shared United Nations results. Joint work should be prioritized where it has the greatest impact, drawing on the strengths and advantages of each entity's mandate and expertise;
- (d) *Collaboration, not competition*: The 2030 Agenda demands a United Nations system in which each part, resident and non-resident, plays its role in a fully transparent and accountable way, and in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, with mutual recognition for respective contributions;
- (e) *Innovation and experimentation*: The United Nations system will collectively create a space for innovative thinking and experimentation at the global, regional and country levels to explore tailored solutions based on the changing global and regional environments and country contexts and needs;
- (f) *Trust and credibility*: Given the comprehensiveness and complexity of the 2030 Agenda, we have to trust each other and be trusted by those we serve, including the most vulnerable and marginalized members of society, while upholding internationally agreed-on norms and standards.

12. In order to put the principle of collaboration into practice, the United Nations Development Group recommended integrating the development, humanitarian, human rights and peace building agendas by:

- (a) Strongly supporting integrated country-level planning frameworks across the United Nations pillars and experimenting with a “One country, one United Nations” framework based on shared strategic sustainable development outcomes, root cause analysis, risk assessment and management, planning and monitoring;
- (b) Ensuring that the United Nations leadership takes concrete steps to support the positioning and implementation of United Nations normative frameworks in a coherent and complementary way and clearly articulating the complementary roles, financing streams and mechanisms in the areas of preparedness, prevention, mitigation, recovery and resilience, to capture the full promise and impact of more joined-up United Nations support across the pillars;
- (c) Working more proactively with partners at the national and subnational levels to build their capacities for crisis prevention and response by making full use of capacities across the pillars.

IV. Economic and Social Council dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the United Nations development system to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

13. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2014/14, decided to convene a transparent and inclusive dialogue involving Member States and all relevant stakeholders on the longer-term positioning of the United Nations development system. The intention of the dialogue was to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with Member States considering the interlinkages among the functions of United Nations system entities, the range of funding practices, governance structures, capacity and impact of the United Nations development system, partnership approaches and organizational arrangements.

14. The first three sessions of the dialogue benefited from the perspectives of Government representatives from capitals and permanent missions, as well as representatives of the United Nations

system. Five messages emerged from the dialogue on the United Nations development system's readiness to implement the 2030 Agenda:

(a) Business as usual was not an option, and the system should be adapted to the new development landscape and also support the implementation of the universal and unified development agenda. It was emphasized that the system had undergone major changes three times since its inception and that a fourth generation of reforms was needed to adjust to the new reality.

(b) The functions of the system had to be reassessed in the light of the changing needs of developing countries. The respective needs of least developed countries, conflict-affected countries and middle-income countries were very different and should be responded to accordingly. It was repeatedly stressed that no one size could fit all.

(c) The changes already initiated to improve programming and delivery of services through "Delivering as one", including the implementation of standard operating procedures, were proving effective and should be extended beyond the existing group of countries that had already committed to implementing the delivery approach.

(d) The system needed to fundamentally change both its overall approach and the processes for developing partnerships in the post-2015 development era. This would require a major change in mindset.

(e) Governance should be strengthened to increase the coherence and effectiveness of the work of the United Nations development system. The composition of the executive boards of the funds and programmes should be reviewed to reflect current realities.

15. At the second session of the dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the United Nations development system, representatives from national capitals clarified the perspective of programme countries in addition to providing further inputs on how the system could better support Member States in implementing the new agenda. There was general consensus among Member States that the United Nations should set its development priorities according to its comparative advantage and core areas of expertise; adopt a universal yet differentiated approach according to country needs and priorities, adjusting its delivery and presence accordingly; and move from convergence of operations to full integration of its working methods. A number of key messages emerged:

(a) National ownership was critical, and the United Nations development system needed to align itself with and support national priorities as embodied in national development plans and sustainable development strategies.

(b) To be effective, policies and decision-making needed to be evidence-based. Monitoring, evaluation and results-based management needed to be strengthened, reflect different contexts, and adapt to the challenges of our time.

(c) While service delivery remained a key function in least developed countries, small island developing States and countries affected by conflict, the United Nations development system should focus on institution-building and capacity development.

(d) The 2012 quadrennial comprehensive policy review needed to be fully implemented with regard to addressing fragmentation, competition and high transaction costs. Coherence and coordination needed to be enhanced both within the system and between the system and other development actors.

(e) Governance arrangements needed to be adapted to reflect the changing development landscape, including by reassessing the role, composition and working methods of governance structures, especially of the funds and programmes.

(f) Funding needed to be adapted to differentiated needs and contexts, and the United Nations development system needed to focus on areas where it added the most value.

(g) In the post-2015 era, the system had an essential role to play in helping Governments build partnerships in order to leverage resources and expertise.

16. During the third session of the dialogue, Member States, while widely acknowledging progress by the United Nations system in implementing the 2012 resolution on quadrennial comprehensive policy review, also identified a number of gaps, in particular in the following areas:

- (a) Promoting targeted and differentiated responses to varying country needs;
- (b) Alignment with national development plans;
- (c) Focusing on institution-building and national capacity-building;

- (d) Support for South-South cooperation;
- (e) System-wide coherence, coordination and integration of activities;
- (f) Coordination at the interagency and intergovernmental levels;
- (g) Alignment between headquarters and offices in the field.

17. The next iteration of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review resolution is expected to be negotiated for possible adoption at the seventy-first session of the General Assembly in December 2016.

V. United Nations Development Group results report for 2014

18. Some important lessons learned in the implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review (General Assembly resolution 67/226) could be useful as the United Nations system starts to implement the 2030 Agenda at different levels in support of Member States.¹ Central to organizational arrangements mandated by the resolution are the resident coordinator system and a “one United Nations” approach to national country teams. In 2014, the United Nations system and partners pooled baseline country-level data collected through the new United Nations Development Group information management system. A total of 132 United Nations country teams reported on strategic analysis and planning to support programming that was forward-looking, informed by baseline analysis, and aligned with global norms and national development goals.

19. Following are the highlights of the results:

- (a) On average, 15 United Nations entities participated in the development of each UNDAF;
- (b) A 2014 review of UNDAF outcomes indicated that joint programming was most relevant for Sustainable Development Goals 1 to 5 and 16;
- (c) Many countries strongly agreed that the United Nations system was better able to align itself with national plans and strategies when individual United Nations entities worked together through an UNDAF and coordinated their activities at the national level (the “Delivering as one” model).

20. The following efforts were undertaken to adjust individual United Nations programme cycles to support the alignment of United Nations planning frameworks with national processes and improve integration between political, humanitarian and development results:

- (a) 54 per cent of United Nations country teams produced joint country results and reports;
- (b) A total of 320 United Nations joint programmes were under way at the country level, with an average of 2.4 per country.

21. Coordination at the country level enabled Governments to access specialized expertise across the United Nations system:

- (a) Between 5 and 10 non-resident agencies participated in almost half of the United Nations country teams;
- (b) 92 per cent of resident coordinator offices provided support to non-resident agencies as United Nations country team members;
- (c) 61 per cent of resident coordinator offices facilitated the engagement of non-resident agencies in country programming.

22. United Nations country teams supported national coordination systems, South-South cooperation and national statistics:

- (a) Nearly half of United Nations country teams reported having conducted capacity development in the use and management of aid;
- (b) A total of 115 United Nations country teams supported national statistical offices, over 50 per cent through capacity development;
- (c) 65 per cent of United Nations country teams provided support for South-South cooperation.

¹ https://undg.org/main/undg_document/results-delivered-sharing-successes-in-2014/.

23. The resident coordinator system helped to develop and manage shared operational support services resulting in faster and better services for United Nations programmes, better risk management, more efficient procurement, and better strategic focus:
- (a) 26 per cent of United Nations country teams reported that they were implementing business operations strategies;
 - (b) 64 per cent of United Nations country teams had established United Nations common premises;
 - (c) 72 per cent of countries were in various stages of implementing the harmonized approach to cash transfers.
24. Country-level collaboration was also reported in the context of crisis management, planning of crisis preparedness and response, and synergies in humanitarian responses:
- (a) 32 per cent of United Nations country teams reported having crisis response agreements with key partners, such as the World Bank;
 - (b) 27 per cent of United Nations country teams reported having undertaken joint risk management assessments;
 - (c) 23 per cent had updated disaster risk reduction strategies.
25. Increased collaboration and joint programming had also resulted in a range of joint external communications and advocacy initiatives and heightened the visibility of United Nations activities:
- (a) 68 per cent of United Nations country teams had joint United Nations communications groups;
 - (b) 54 per cent of United Nations country teams had a joint communications strategy;
 - (c) 75 per cent of United Nations country teams had a common United Nations website.
26. Human rights and development approaches supported stronger linkages between the normative and operational aspects of United Nations programming:
- (a) 59 per cent of United Nations country teams were engaging with the Universal Periodic Review process;
 - (b) 42 per cent of countries had conducted some form of human rights analysis;
 - (c) 82 per cent of United Nations country teams reported supporting Governments' efforts to mainstream human rights into national development policies and programmes.
27. Joint resource mobilization and fund management had helped to identify funding gaps and prevent duplication and competition for donor resources:
- (a) 30 per cent of United Nations country teams had developed joint resource mobilization strategies;
 - (b) 33 per cent of United Nations country teams had pooled funding mechanisms in place, such as multi-donor trust funds or "one United Nations" funds.
28. At the regional level, the United Nations Development Group played an important role in providing tailored technical support to United Nations country teams, supporting the roll-out of UNDAFs and helping to manage performance.
- (a) Over 40 UNDAFs in various stages of their roll-outs were supported, while regional crisis responses were supported for the Ebola Virus Disease outbreak and the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic;
 - (b) Performance assessments for the 2013 reporting cycle had been conducted for all resident coordinators and United Nations country teams in all six regions;
 - (c) Regional United Nations Development Group teams had supported post-2015 regional forums in coordination with the regional economic commissions as well as 28 post-2015 national consultations.²

² More details are provided in the report of the Executive Director on coordination across the United Nations system in the field of the environment, including the Environment Management Group (UNEP/EA.2/10).

VI. Conclusions

29. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda will require platforms that integrate multiple stakeholders, from the United Nations system and beyond, including from local government, civil society and the private sector, in genuine partnerships for decision-making, strategic planning, service delivery, knowledge sharing, and collective monitoring and accountability at all levels – national, regional and global. Consensus is also emerging in the United Nations Development Group on the need to draw on expertise and capabilities from all United Nations system entities to better respond to regional, subregional and national circumstances and needs. Such flexible deployment of skills and expertise will rely on

system-wide awareness of the availability of expertise to support the 2030 Agenda.

30. UNEP, through its medium-term strategy for the period 2018–2021, has signalled its investment strategy in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The UNEP regional and subregional offices are central to “one United Nations” programme delivery at the country level, and to coordination with other United Nations funds, programmes and agencies at the regional and national levels.

31. UNEP programming must be more flexible and responsive in order to meet the emerging needs of the range of development situations, including being part of the United Nations humanitarian and emergency response system.

32. Lastly, there is a need for coherent, integrated system-wide approaches that effectively link normative frameworks with operational activities and encompass the full range of United Nations activities in the areas of development, humanitarian work, peace and security and human rights.