



United Nations Environment Programme

PORTFOLIO EVALUATION OF SELECTED UNEP MEA PROJECTS

Final Evaluation Report

**“Support for Implementation of the Biodiversity and Ecosystem and the Chemicals and Waste Cluster of
Multilateral Environmental Agreements”**

**“Law and Environment Outlook: Web-Tools for the Implementation and Enforcement of International
Environmental Law and Internationally Agreed Goals and Targets”**

**“Improving the Effectiveness of and Cooperation among Biodiversity-Related Conventions and Exploring
Opportunities or Further Synergies”**

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UNEP Evaluation Office

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REGIONAL MEA FOCAL POINT PROJECT			
UNEP PIMS ID:	01543	IMIS number:	3C82
Sub-programme:	SP 4 – Environmental Governance	Expected Accomplishment(s):	PoW 2012/13 – EA 4(a) Pow 2012/13 – EA 4(b)
UNEP approval date:	11 April 2012	PoW Output(s):	PoW 2012/13 – 4a4 PoW 2012/13 – 4a5 PoW 2012/13 – 4b3 PoW 2012/13 – 4b5
Current Project Manager	Jiri Hlavacek	Previous Project Manager	Arkadi Levintanus
Expected Start Date:	01 January 2012	Actual start date:	11 April 2012
Planned completion date:	31 December 2014	Actual completion date:	31 December 2015
Planned project budget at approval:	US\$ 5,596,200	Total expenditures reported	US\$ 5,059,433
Planned Environment Fund (EF) allocation:	US\$ 60,000	Actual EF expenditures :	US\$ 60,000
Planned Extra-budgetary financing (XBF):	US\$5,536,200	Actual XBF expenditures:	US\$ 4,999,433
XBF secured:	US\$ 5,317,264 ¹	Leveraged financing:	
First Disbursement:		Date of financial closure:	Approx. February 2016
No. of revisions:	2 ²	Date of last revision:	28 November 2014
Date of last Steering Committee meeting:	N/A. Informal reporting committee only-		
Mid-term review/evaluation (planned date):	Subject to funds availability	Mid-term review/evaluation (actual date):	Not carried out
Terminal Evaluation (actual date):	November 2015 – June 2016		

¹ Signed project document of 2012 indicates an amount of unsecured funds of 1800 000\$

² There were two project revisions for regional MEA focal point project June 2013 and November 2014. The 2013 revision was to add the earmarked 400 000\$ from the China fund. The 2014 revision overall reduced budget downward by 410080\$ while there was additional secured funding from Norway and EU. The revision indicated an unsecured amount of 603 180\$

“Law and Environment Outlook: Web-Tools for the Implementation and Enforcement of International Environmental Law and Internationally Agreed Goals and Targets” (LEO Project)			
UNEP PIMS ID:	01651	IMIS number:	3E78
Sub-programme:	SP 4 – Environmental Governance	Expected Accomplishment(s):	PoW 2012/2013 - EA (b) PoW 2014/2015 - EA (b)
Current Project Manager	Eva Duer	Previous Project Manager	No change
UNEP approval date:	20 November 2013	PoW Output(s):	PoW 2012/2013 - 4b1 PoW 2014/2015 - 4b1
Expected Start Date:	1 October 2013	Actual start date:	20 November 2013
Planned completion date:	31 December 2015	Actual completion date:	June 2016
Planned project budget at approval:	\$ 2,295,215.00	Total expenditures reported as of Dec 2015:	US\$77 831 ³
Planned Environment Fund (EF) allocation:		Actual EF expenditures reported as of Dec 2015:	
Planned Extra-budgetary financing (XBF):	\$1 048 490	Actual XBF expenditures reported as of Dec 2015]:	US\$757,235
XBF secured:	US\$1,116,924	Leveraged financing:	-
First Disbursement:	August 2013	Date of financial closure:	60 days after project closure
No. of revisions:	1	Date of last revision:	06-04-2016
Date of last Steering Committee meeting:	IKM steering committee annual meeting		
Mid-term review/evaluation (planned date):	Not conducted	Mid-term review/evaluation (actual date):	Not conducted
Terminal Evaluation (actual date):	November 2015- June 2016		

³ Excluding staff costs

“Improving the Effectiveness of and Cooperation among Biodiversity-Related Conventions and Exploring Opportunities or Further Synergies” (Biodiversity MEA Synergy Project)			
UNEP PIMS ID:	01678	IMIS number:	
Sub-programme:	SP 4 – Environmental Governance	Expected Accomplishment(s):	EA (a)
Current Project Manager	Balakrishna Pisupati (a.i.)	Previous Project Manager	Margareta Oduk, Ileana Lopez
UNEP approval date:	23 January 2014	PoW Output(s):	Phase 1: POW 2014/15 414 Phase 2: POW 2016/17 414
Expected Start Date:	September 2013	Actual start date:	14 January 2014
Planned completion date:	31 December 2017	Actual completion date:	December 2015/Ongoing
Planned project budget at approval:	US\$2,598,600	Total expenditures reported as of Dec 2015	US\$2,071,912
Planned Environment Fund (EF) allocation:	US\$1,000,000	Actual EF expenditures reported as of Dec 2015:	US\$632,421
Planned Extra-budgetary financing (XBF):	US\$1,600,000	Actual XBF expenditures reported as of Dec 2015:	US\$1,439,491
XBF secured:	US\$1,758,745	Leveraged financing:	-
First Disbursement:	Not applicable	Date of financial closure:	Ongoing
No. of revisions:	1	Date of last revision:	
Date of last Steering Committee meeting:	N/A		
Mid-term review/evaluation (planned date):	December 2015	Mid-term review/evaluation (actual date):	Not done
Final evaluation	November 2015-June 2016		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- a. The evaluation referred to as the *MEA portfolio evaluation* covers the results of three selected projects as well as links and synergies between the projects. These are “Support for Implementation of the Biodiversity and Ecosystem and the Chemicals and Waste Cluster of Multilateral Environmental Agreements” (*Regional MEA Focal Points Project*); “Law and Environment Outlook: Web-Tools for the Implementation and Enforcement of International Environmental Law and Internationally Agreed Goals and Targets” (*LEO Project*) and “Improving the Effectiveness of and Cooperation among Biodiversity-Related Conventions and Exploring Opportunities or Further Synergies” (*Biodiversity MEA Synergy Project*).
- b. The MEA Portfolio Evaluation has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements of project performance in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, and determine actual project outcomes and potential impacts (ii) to promote operational improvement, through results and lessons learned from the three projects, as well as encourage reflection and learning by UNEP staff and key project stakeholders.
- c. The Regional MEA focal point project ended in December 2015, as did the Biodiversity MEA synergy project, with the exception of one output presented at the May 2016 UNEA. The LEO project initially planned to end in December 2015, was extended to June 2016⁴. A next phase is foreseen for both the LEO and the biodiversity MEA synergy project. The projects have been implemented under the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS) for periods 2010-2013 and 2014-2017 and associated Programmes of Works (PoWs). All three projects benefitted from financial support from the ENRTP Strategic Cooperation Agreement (SCA) between UNEP and the European Commission (EC), with funds from both DG Environment and DG Development.
- d. The *Regional MEA focal point project* focused on providing technical support and advisory services to countries for strengthened implementation of six major MEAs, clustered under biodiversity/ecosystems and chemicals/waste thematic areas. Regionally-based programme officers were to assist countries to fill the implementation gap at country and regional level, through collaborative efforts with selected MEA secretariats. This project was to lead to increased understanding of key issues in on-going global MEA negotiating processes, promoting synergies and best practices in MEA implementation.
- e. The *LEO project* consisted of consolidating and enhancing web tools to improve access to and use of information on international environmental law and conventions. Building on past efforts, the LEO project focused on development of web-based knowledge tools in partnership with MEA secretariats, host agencies and major groups: a one-stop InforMEA portal providing access to COP/MOP decisions, national reports and plans; an internationally accepted semantic standard for environmental law and policy (Law and Environment Ontology) and, an e-learning portal providing access to a series of short courses on MEA topics.
- f. The *Biodiversity MEA synergy project* aimed to improve the efficiency, enhance coordination and cooperation, promote policy coherence and explore the opportunities for further synergies in implementation of the six major biodiversity-related MEAs. The project would identify opportunities and options for enhancing cooperation between UNEP, other host institutions and the secretariats of the biodiversity-related conventions

⁴ Project revision submitted in January 2016 communicated by project manager.

in working towards more efficient and effective implementation at global, regional and national levels. The project would also provide the necessary additional support to on-going initiatives for the revisions of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs).

- g. The three projects address components of environmental governance that are critical to advancing MEA implementation: ensuring regional presence and support to countries; systematizing information on international environmental laws and conventions, and demystifying the possibilities of synergies for more effective implementation of biodiversity-related MEAs. The shared objectives of the projects to advance coherence and synergy in implementation of MEAs respond to the recognized issue of MEA institutional fragmentation, overwhelming requirements of MEA implementation on developing countries, need for strengthened cooperation and mutually beneficial collaboration between UNEP and MEA secretariats work on MEAs, and, fill the implementation gap. The three projects clearly cover areas of UNEP mandate and contribute to the POW and its Environmental Governance Sub-programme with crosscutting impact on other related sub-programmes as Ecosystem Management and Chemicals and Waste. The Regional MEA focal point and biodiversity MEA synergy projects were intended as technical support provided to governments to facilitate coherence and synergy in the implementation of MEAs at global, regional and national levels.
- h. The impact drivers and assumptions behind the projects were vaguely considered, in the design and planning of all three projects and not for specific causal pathways. The implicit drivers and assumptions were outlined in a reconstructed theory of change for evaluation purposes (sections II-I). National focal points (NFPs) of the relevant conventions are key target beneficiaries yet there were limited means to reach the national audiences both in projects and for the evaluation. Monitoring of progress of the projects was limited to cursory qualifiers in UNEP PIMS and both quarterly and annual ENRTP reports. No mid-term evaluations (MTE) were carried out on any of the projects, although they were initially planned.
- i. The strongest evidence of potential impacts of the three projects in terms of how they are likely to foster change and collaboration in implementation of MEAs is the UNEA and MEAs COPs resolutions regarding synergies. The increase in synergy in implementation of biodiversity-related MEAs at global, regional and country level has been anchored by the UNEA-2 resolution inviting the governing bodies of biodiversity-related conventions, other relevant bodies to further strengthen their cooperation and enhance synergies among them, considering the results of the biodiversity MEA synergy project. The sustained changes to institutional frameworks are expected to come in the future, but there is no evidence that they have so far materialized. NBSAPs are supported by UNEP and MEAs as an effective instrument for policy change and NBSAPs revisions are promising. However, there is little evidence of integration in national development systems and the project contributions to NBSAPs revisions and implementation were marginal compared to the on-going NBSAPs support by CBD and GEF supported initiatives.
- j. The *Regional MEA focal point project* responded to a recognized need for stronger regional presence in support of implementation of MEAs, expressed by CBD in particular. The eight MEA secretariats interviewed for this evaluation are unanimous on the relevance of UNEP regional presence supporting MEAs, as were, UNEP staff. The project was not rolled out in a manner that allowed effective support. There were issues in implementation of the project significantly affecting its performance, namely unresolved ambiguity in the mechanisms for collaborative arrangements and lack of funds to deliver advisory services. Vague mandates, lack of clarity on how to access services of regional MEA focal points and ineffectiveness of staff and project fund management diminished the returns on an investment of some 5 million dollars. There were significant differences between

the planned budget and expenditures of several budget items. Overall the project is considered moderately unsatisfactory.

- k. The key factors that facilitated good performance of the *LEO project* were effective UNEP project management and backstopping and the active participation of MEA stakeholders. The InforMEA and LEO project are considered to be in many respects a model example of UNEP responsive support to MEAs, resulting in shared results that are beyond the sum of individual ones. UNEP exercised leadership, without undue control over the agenda, gaining respect and praise from MEA partners. The project builds on well-functioning partnerships. Cost effectiveness is very good due to effective management and significant in kind contributions of MEA partners. The UNEP management responsiveness, helpful attitude in helping to convene partners and facilitate their contributions has been a key success factor.
- l. InforMEA partners working collaboratively on an equal level, with no competition, no hierarchy and offering a knowledge product that is beyond the sum contribution of each partner is a great example of cooperation among MEAs to increase coherence and synergies. The benefit to collaborating partners is noteworthy: helping to organize their information content, opening the door to effective knowledge management, exchanging of experiences, removing duplicative efforts by reusing the tools that have been developed by other partners are among the benefits acknowledged by partners and a key project lesson. There has been so far too little attention to InforMEA and LEO country user needs. While there was an initial stakeholder analysis and promising outreach plans, the project has only recently started to track user responses and incorporate them in continual improvements of web tools. The project is ready for additional outreach to both country users and internal audiences of partner organizations. Overall, the project performance is satisfactory.
- m. The adoption of the UNEA resolutions on synergies among biodiversity related conventions is strong evidence that the knowledge products generated and captured by the *Biodiversity MEA synergy project* will reach large audiences. These comprise the paper *Elaboration of options for enhancing synergies among biodiversity-related conventions* (so called the Options paper) and the *Sourcebook of Opportunities for Enhancing Cooperation among the Biodiversity related Conventions at National and Regional level*, and the related knowledge products. To what extent the synergy messages and examples captured in these documents lead to changes in national policy or institutional practice in implementation of MEAS is promising, but not yet demonstrated.
- n. What appears to be a solid base in the design of the Biodiversity MEA synergy project, did not adequately respond to the assessment of several MEAs regarding the type of support needed to advance implementation with increased cooperation and synergy. Whilst some evaluation respondents perceive the options paper and sourcebook to be helpful and effective, there is a sense among some respondents that the options paper and sourcebook lacked ambition, simply repeating what is already being done by MEAs. The UNEA-2 resolution inviting governing bodies of conventions to consider the measures outlined in the option paper is promising in improving country ownership and drive-ness as well as inviting MEA secretariat to deepen the assessment and planning of collaborative arrangements to improve coherence and synergies in the implementation of MEAs. Overall, the project performance is satisfactory having delivered the planned outputs and effectively channelling them through the UNEA decision process.
- o. A basic lesson learned from these projects. Not new but often forgotten is that a situation analysis to understand the problem and potential solutions through discussion with key stakeholders is a prerequisite to adequate project design and planning. This is also the basis for elaborating a useful theory of change. When complexity is overwhelming and making adequate situational analysis difficult, such as in the MEA projects,

structuring and downsizing into manageable components is more effective than packaging general vague response actions.

- p. Carry through with monitoring and self- evaluation to work in informative feedback loops and adjust project actions accordingly is another basic lesson. For client and user based services, as were the Regional MEA focal point project and partnership arrangements, this involves regular check that specific user and other stakeholders' needs are met. For users, avoid confusing high numbers with quality of use. For example, many more youth using InforMEA and LEO is good, but they are not the ones who will, as a result, improve the integration of international laws and conventions in national policies and practices.
- q. Another lesson is that in the quest for collaborative arrangements UNEP needs to be more responsive to MEA secretariats, rather than try to control the agenda. This requires maturity, adequate consultation and shedding perceptions of divisive attitudes. The evaluation question of how can UNEP better help with MEA implementation, generated answers that are concrete, effective and that would significantly improve implementation. Collaboration on supporting stronger laws to combat poaching of rare and endangered species is an example. Collaborative arrangements require willingness which seems to be there, and overcoming artificial barriers that prevent joint actions such as a joint UNEP-CBD workshop on synergies. Joint programming is an institutional collaborative arrangement that also requires dedicated time and effort. The mutual supportive programming that is advocated by UNEA resolution is a good step in that direction.
- r. Recommendations for the next phase of the LEO and Biodiversity MEA synergy projects are to develop user specific outreach and feedback strategies for respectively InforMEA and the Sourcebook. The next phase is ready to accelerate outreach to both internal audiences within MEA secretariats and specific users such as national focal points for MEAs. Deepening online user feedback methods and better integrate user responses to continual system improvements are also recommended.
- s. Effective consultations with each of the MEA secretariats and with coordinating groups such as the Biodiversity Liaison Group in planning out the next steps. How could UNEP better help with MEA implementation? What can we do together with each of the MEAs? Specific tailored responses to these questions is a necessary reflection following the UNEA resolutions and prerequisite to an effective next phase.

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Abbreviations

AMCEN	African Ministerial Conference on the Environment
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CMS	Convention on Migratory Species
CPR	Committee of Permanent Representatives
ECOLEX	environmental law information service
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GEF	Global Environment Facility
InforMEA	United Nations information portal on multilateral environmental agreements
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
NFP	National Focal Points
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
PIMS	Programme information management system
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WCMC	World Conservation Monitoring Centre

I INTRODUCTION

1. This is the draft report of the evaluation of the following three projects of the UNEP Environmental Governance Sub-programme portfolio focusing on multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs):
 - “Support for Implementation of the Biodiversity and Ecosystem and the Chemicals and Waste Cluster of Multilateral Environmental Agreements” (*Regional MEA Focal Points Project*);
 - “Law and Environment Outlook: Web-Tools for the Implementation and Enforcement of International Environmental Law and Internationally Agreed Goals and Targets” (*LEO Project*) and,
 - “Improving the Effectiveness of and Cooperation among Biodiversity-Related Conventions and Exploring Opportunities or Further Synergies” (*Biodiversity MEA Synergy Project*).
2. The Regional MEA focal point project ended in December 2015, as did the Biodiversity MEA synergy project, with the exception of one output presented at the May 2016 UNEA. The LEO project initially planned to end in December 2015, was extended to June 2016⁵. A next phase is foreseen for both the LEO and the biodiversity MEA synergy project. The projects have been implemented under the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS) for periods 2010-2013 and 2014-2017 and associated Programmes of Works (PoWs). All three projects benefitted from financial support from the ENRTP Strategic Cooperation Agreement (SCA) between UNEP and the European Commission (EC), with funds from both DG Environment and DG Development.
3. The *Regional MEA Focal Points Project* focused on providing technical support and advisory services to countries for strengthened implementation of six major MEAs, clustered under biodiversity/ecosystems and chemicals/waste thematic areas. Regionally-based programme officers were to assist countries to fill the implementation gap at country and regional level, through collaborative efforts with selected MEA secretariats. This project was to lead to increased understanding of key issues in on-going global MEA negotiating processes, promoting synergies and best practices in MEA implementation.
4. The LEO project consisted of consolidating and enhancing web tools to improve access to and use of information on international environmental law and conventions. Building on past efforts, the LEO project focused on development of three web-based knowledge products in partnership with MEA secretariats, host agencies and major groups: a one-stop InforMEA portal providing access to Treaty texts, COP/MOP decisions, national reports and plans, national focal points information, ratification information, and MEA news and events; an internationally accepted semantic standard for environmental law and policy (Law and environment Ontology) and, an e-learning portal providing access to a series of short courses on MEA topics.
5. The *Biodiversity MEA synergy project* aimed to improve the efficiency, enhance coordination and cooperation, promote policy coherence and explore the opportunities for further synergies in implementation of the six major biodiversity-related MEAs. The project would identify opportunities and options for enhancing cooperation between UNEP, other host institutions and the secretariats of the biodiversity-related conventions in working towards more efficient and effective implementation at global, regional and national levels. The project would also provide the necessary additional support to on-going initiatives for the revisions of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs).
6. The evaluation referred to as the *MEA portfolio evaluation* covers the results of the three projects as well as links and synergies between the projects. The MEA Portfolio Evaluation has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements of project performance in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, and determine actual project outcomes and potential impacts (ii) to promote operational improvement, through results and lessons learned from the three projects, as well as encourage reflection and learning by UNEP staff and key project stakeholders.

⁵ Project revision submitted in January 2016 communicated by project manager.

7. The scope of this evaluation is described in the terms of references (TOR) prepared by the UNEP Evaluation Office. An inception phase involved further scoping and planning of the portfolio evaluation following review of key project documentation, exchanges with project managers, key staff and the Environmental Governance Sub-programme Coordinator. The inception report (February 2016) captures this initial stage of the evaluation.
8. The evaluation phase involved further document review, input to and analysis of user surveys. Interviews were carried out with a total of 43 people from nine organizations. They include key UNEP project staff (project managers, collaborating divisions, former regional MEA focal points), MEA secretariat partners and beneficiaries as well as external partners. The large majority was individual interviews; three were with two team members participating and one with three interviewees participating. A list of interviewees appears in Annex 1.
9. Although the several hundred national focal points (NFPs) of the relevant conventions are key target beneficiaries, there were limited means to reach the national audiences both in projects and for the evaluation, and basically no means to reach a significant proportion of potential beneficiaries. The evaluation findings regarding national stakeholders is essentially derived from project survey results, namely on InforMEA and its LEO component, and on some limited participants evaluations of workshops carried out either in the context of the regional focal points or the biodiversity MEA synergy project.

II THE PROJECTS

10. Since the early 1970s, countries have successfully negotiated a large number of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) creating several instruments addressing similar and interlinked issues often supported by separate administrative structures. This multiplication has led to some fragmentation and often distracted attention on ensuring effectiveness of country implementation. The different sets of obligations pertaining to these instruments have posed significant challenges toward their coherent and effective enactment. Countries have expressed concerns about the number of obligations, overloaded meetings and working agendas, the possible duplication of tasks emanating from different international bodies, burdensome reporting procedures as well as compliance and enforcement challenges. All three projects of this portfolio were precisely geared to tackle this problem often referred to as the MEA implementation gap.
11. In terms of broader sustainable development policy context, the projects were designed and planned after the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development of June 2012. Governments acknowledged the problem and encouraged its resolve as stated in the outcome document of the conference *“The future we want”*: *“89. We recognize the significant contributions to sustainable development made by the multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). We acknowledge the work already undertaken to enhance synergies among the three Conventions in the chemicals and waste cluster (the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions). We encourage parties to MEAs to consider further measures, in these and other clusters, as appropriate, to promote policy coherence at all relevant levels, improve efficiency, reduce unnecessary overlap and duplication, and enhance coordination and cooperation among MEAs, including the three Rio Conventions as well as with the UN system in the field.”*
12. This call from governments followed the UNEP Governing Council (GC) 2012 decision SS.XII/3 acknowledging the challenge of MEA fragmentation and the importance of enhancing synergies, including at the national and regional levels, among the conventions and the further GC request that the UNEP Executive Director undertake *“appropriate, further activities to improve the effectiveness of and cooperation among multilateral environmental agreements, taking into account the autonomous decision-making authority of the conferences of the parties”* and *“explore the opportunities for further synergies in the administrative functions of the multilateral environmental agreement secretariats administered by the United Nations Environment Programme and to provide advice on such opportunities to the governing bodies of those multilateral environmental agreements”*.
13. The stance on environmental governance as stated in the UNEP Medium Term Strategy 2014-2017 is that *“The current system of international environmental governance, in which the multilateral agreements are poorly coordinated with one another, should be strengthened to meet the needs of the twenty-first century. The system of*

environmental governance lacks the representativeness, accountability and effectiveness necessary for the transition to sustainability. A much higher level of participation and transparency is needed". Addressing this major challenge, the objective of the Environmental Governance Sub-programme is to strengthen synergies and coherence in environmental governance.

*Lack of capacity is often named as a reason for the lack of action, whereby in fact the reverse is true: because of the lack of capacity, collaboration and synergies become even more important.*⁶

14. The three projects under review contribute to the Environmental Governance Sub-programme. The Theory of Change of the Programme Framework for 2014-2017 shows the Regional MEA Focal Points and biodiversity MEA synergy projects contributing to the expected accomplishment A, *Coherence and synergies*: the United Nations system and multilateral environmental agreements, respecting the mandates of each entity, demonstrate increasing coherence and synergy of actions on environmental issues. A precondition for coherence and synergies are collaborative arrangements between UNEP and MEA and provision of information and knowledge bases for MEA implementation. The two projects are considered as "technical support" provided to governments to facilitate coherence and synergy in the implementation of MEAs. The LEO project contributes to Expected accomplishment B: *Law*: Enhanced capacity of countries to develop and enforce laws and strengthen institutions to achieve internationally agreed environmental objectives and goals and comply with related obligations. The project design of an inter-organization system with one window access to MEA information is also a collaborative arrangement between UNEP and MEA secretariats.
15. Indicators of achievements of *Expected accomplishment A* are collaborative arrangements between UNEP and the secretariats of selected MEAs. They aim toward an increase in coherence, efficiency and synergy between the UNEP programme of work and the programme of work of those agreements. This performance indicator is considered a precondition to the *expected accomplishment A* and a measure of achievement of project outcome for the Biodiversity MEA synergy and MEA regional focal point projects, as well as the LEO project. The LEO project partnership producing enhanced multi-organization knowledge products is also an example of collaborative arrangements between UNEP and MEA secretariats.
16. Another key contextual change highlighted in UNEPs Medium Term Strategy is the transition to a results-based organization to "make its work more strategic and coherent to meet country needs more effectively and demonstrate its results in tangible terms"⁷. The MEA focal point project and the LEO project were both initially designed before adoption, in 2013, of a revised UNEP programming manual which established new standards of project design and implementation including a focus on key issues of sustainability, replicability, theory of change, partnership, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation⁸. The specific context, objectives, key milestones, implementation arrangements and reconstructed theory of change of each of the three projects are presented in the following sections.

II-1. Regional MEA Focal Points Project

A. CONTEXT

17. The regional MEA Focal Points Project was designed and approved in 2012 as part of the UNEP Programme of Work 2012-2013. The project was a continuation of a pilot phase that began in 2009 with regional MEA Focal Points assigned to each of the UNEP regional offices. The project was to strengthen environmental governance through

⁶ Speaker at the Interlaken first expert meeting on synergies

⁷ UNEP Medium Term Strategy 2014-2017

⁸ UNEP Programming manual 2013

more holistic and coherent implementation of the six MEAs in the biodiversity cluster, as well as MEAs in the chemicals and wastes cluster.

B.OBJECTIVES AND COMPONENTS

18. The Regional MEA Focal Points Project aimed for increased understanding of MEA issues and implementation of best practice in the global negotiating forums and for reinforced country and regional level of MEA implementation, with UNEP support.
19. During the project between 2012 and 2015, a total of eight regional focal points were assigned to the UNEP Regional Offices (ROA, ROAP, ROE, ROLAC and ROWA⁹). Through strengthened presence and networks in the regions, UNEP would fill some of the MEA implementation gaps, namely provide backing to MEA processes at the global level and support to regional and country level work of UNEP and MEA secretariats. This comprised identifying priority regional MEA-implementation related issues and providing platforms for problem identification and policy analysis. It would also facilitate multi-country approaches to address issues of common concern. UNEP was to assist countries to develop national approaches for the effective implementation of MEAs, providing policy advice and technical assistance and training to national focal points and other key stakeholders, including indigenous and local communities, and also in line with the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-Building.

C. TARGET AREAS/GROUPS

20. The main stakeholders of the project were the contracting parties/national governments, most often represented by the national focal point (NFP) for each convention, as well as the respective selected MEA secretariats. The targeted governments are the contracting parties to the MEAs and those solicited for ratification of new agreements. The project being a continuation of a pilot phase initiated in 2009, benefited from some history of collaboration and exchange between the stakeholders. During initial phase of the project, in June 2012, UNEP held joint work planning workshops with CITES, CMS and RAMSAR Convention secretariats to identify specific priority areas of support needed from regional MEA focal points. This support covered communication and liaison as well as programmatic areas.
21. The project was global in scope, with support work planned to be carried out in all regions, as follows :
 - 1) Biodiversity and ecosystems MEAs Focal Point for Africa based in Nairobi (Kenya);
 - 2) Biodiversity and ecosystems MEAs Focal Point for Asia and the Pacific based in Bangkok (Thailand);
 - 3) Biodiversity and ecosystems MEAs Focal Point for West Asia based in Manama (Bahrain);
 - 4) Biodiversity and ecosystems MEAs Focal Point for Latin America and the Caribbean based in Panama (Panama);
 - 5) Chemicals and waste MEAs Focal Point for Africa based in Nairobi (Kenya);
 - 6) Chemicals and waste MEAs Focal Point for Asia and the Pacific based in Bangkok (Thailand);
 - 7) Chemicals and waste MEAs Focal Point for Europe based in Geneva (Switzerland).

D. MILESTONES/KEY DATES IN PROJECTS DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

22. Milestones were set in terms of bi-annual target numbers of meetings, training sessions and workshops on issues under MEA negotiation process convened and serviced, as well as technical papers and reports on best practices and lessons learned drafted and shared with MEA secretariats and within UNEP. For the first outcome of *Increased understanding of Issues under MEA negotiating process and best practices in MEA implementation*¹⁰. The target for issues on agendas of MEA COPs/MOPs that reflect UNEP priorities increased from 10 in the initial project document

⁹ ROA – Regional Office for Africa; ROAP – Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific; ROE – Regional Office for Europe; ROLAC – Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean; and ROWA – Regional Office For West Asia

¹⁰ UNEP MEA regional focal point project revision 2014

to 40 in the 2014 revision. This target was considered the level achieved in 2012-2013. To achieve outcome 2 of *Implementation of the biodiversity and chemical –related MEA strengthened at the regional and country levels*, 35 countries were to adopt regional/sub regional and national actions plans and strategies for implementation of the biodiversity and chemical related MEAs, and 50 countries using UNEP suggested approaches and tools.¹¹ Milestones for related outputs were data and information briefs compiled and disseminated to countries, and regional/sub regional action plans or strategies developed. Trainings of national focal points on MEA implementation for output 2 c, joint activities among multiple MEAs launched and assisted.

E. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

23. The regional MEA focal points were based in regional offices, reporting firstly to regional offices secondly to DELC serving mainly MEA secretariats, but also supporting national and regional initiatives. (Table II-1).

Responsible party	Responsibilities
DELC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General oversight and coordination of the project
MEA Focal Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide day to day management of the project components at regional and national levels • Liaise with project partners, regional and national stakeholders • Advise DELC on implementation challenges and ways to strengthen the project performance

F. PROJECT FINANCING

24. The total budget for the project was 5 596 200 \$ of which 71% (3 993 000\$) was to cover salaries of MEA focal points, the other planned and approved budget items were for consultant fees, travel, subcontracts, group training, reporting, and evaluation, and the 45 000\$ per project EU allocation for visibility. (Annex 3 table A3-1)

25. Salary and benefit costs of regional focal points were paid by DELC. Co-financing was obtained from the EC ENRTP (2 019 452\$ /36%) as well as from Norway (1 681 812\$/30%), China (400 000\$), Spain (100 000\$), Sweden (80 000\$) and one million dollars (1 036 000\$) of donor financing collated in a so called counterpart pooled fund. The UNEP Environment Fund contribution was 60 000\$.

G. PROJECT PARTNERS

26. MEA secretariats were considered both partners and beneficiaries of the project. The China-ASEAN Environmental Cooperation Centre (CAEC) and or ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) were given a subcontract of 339 123\$ of the earmarked 400 000\$ from China, for the Development and Implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and Aichi Targets,” which is supported by the China Trust Fund to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The latter is planned and reported on within a separate dedicated project and considered a “subproject” of the regional MEA focal point project. Within UNEP, DELC was the managing division of the project, working with DEPI, DTIE, DEWA and DRC/RSO.

H. CHANGES IN DESIGN DURING IMPLEMENTATION

27. There were two project revisions, a first one in 2013 for the addition of 400 000\$ earmarked funding from China for Biodiversity MEA strategic planning supporting Asian countries and China on revisions to their NBSAPs. The second in 2014 extended the planned ending from December 2014 to December 2015.

28. At some point in 2014, financing for the posts shifted to other UNEP divisions. As of January 2016, after the end of project at least six of the former regional MEA focal points were rehired in similar posts managed by other divisions.

¹¹ UNEP MEA regional focal point project revision 2014

¹² Extracted from evaluation TORs

I. RECONSTRUCTED THEORY OF CHANGE OF THE PROJECT

29. What problematic situation did the project intend to change? What are the preconditions for this change to happen? Who needs to be engaged? A Theory of Change (TOC) to be addressed by the project was not constructed in the project design and planning phase. The project was designed prior to UNEP requirements for TOC in project planning and design, also in a context of complex situation of MEA implementation gaps, with multiple dimensions and broad stroke recognition of issues and analysis to resolve. Stakeholders by the hundreds representing diverse interests are wedged into a system resisting change with small steps improvements on synergies among MEAs and overall implementation. In this context, effort to think out collectively with MEA secretariats where to start to improve the situation would have been a significant step forward. There was in fact little involvement of MEA secretariats in project design.
30. A summary depiction of the Theory of Change behind the projects, including the intended change pathways, is illustrated in diagram 1. This is complemented by key indicators of outcome achievements (table II-2). The TOC has been reconstructed based on the information gathered during the inception phase of the evaluation. The TOC and indicators served to verify assumptions and results in interviews. Some initial outcome indicators for the regional MEA project were left out for evaluation purposes as they are hardly verifiable and referring to implicit concepts.
31. In brief, in a situation where institutional fragmentation with overlap or duplication of obligations for member states are among the causes of MEA implementation gaps, the project aimed for changes in global implementation arrangements that would stem from stakeholders *common understanding of means to improve institutional and programmatic effectiveness and efficiencies*. National and regional stakeholder collaboration and coordination would be achieved through technical support facilitated by UNEP. The support on biodiversity is namely on NBSAPs that incorporate Aichi targets commitments of all biodiversity MEAs, and are integrated in development processes. UNEPs presence and regional capacities for support to MEAs were to be strengthened. This change is driven by the capacities of regional MEA focal points to effectively support and guide national MEA focal points in MEA implementation. A precondition for this to happen is that regional MEA focal points have capabilities to effectively support MEA secretariats in country and regional level work on MEA implementation. Conversely, regional MEA focal points need to gain the confidence of MEA secretariats, mobilize regional institutions and obtain technical back up from UNEP divisions. MEA regional support was shouldering a large weight in project success, while obviously numerous other preconditions and change steps on multiple fronts are required to achieve the on the ground environmental changes that MEA provisions are intended to reach.
32. The assumption, implicit in the project design, is that countries are committed to incorporate their MEA obligations in their national policies and sustainable development processes. The implicit **drivers** affecting quality of outputs and their effective use by stakeholders towards the project outcome and beyond are key; and are that
- 1) MEA secretariats are engaged in collaborative actions with UNEP to support national implementation of MEAs.
 - 2) MEA regional focal points have capacities and are knowledgeable to provide timely and relevant technical support and guidance to National MEA focal points and technical back up to MEA secretariats.
 - 3) National MEA focal points are effectively engaged.
 - 4) Regional institutions promote and support effective MEA implementation.
 - 5) UNEP divisions provide technical support to MEA regional focal points.

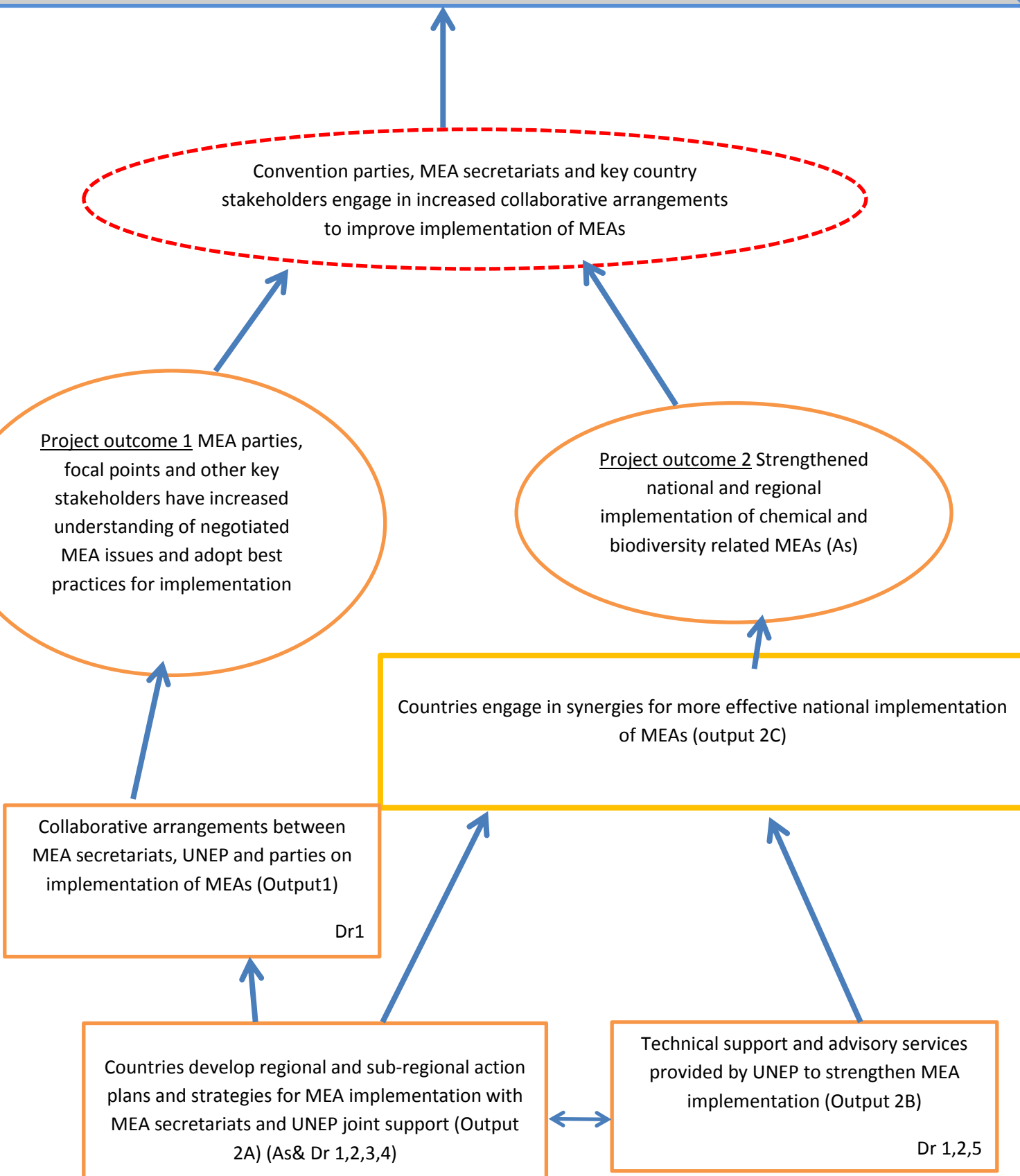
Table II-2. Selected Outcome Indicators: adjusted from project planning documents¹³

What will change? Number of:	Who?	How many?	By when?
Lessons learned and better practices identified by UNEP reflected in MEA global forum agendas and decisions	MEA COPs , MOPs agenda and decisions	17	December 2015

¹³ Prodocs refers to 2012 Project document with revisions following PRC review and project revisions of 2013 and 2014.

Collaborative regional or sub regional action plans and strategies for implementation of chemical or biodiversity related MEAs, with regional MEA focal points support	Countries of a given region via national MEA focal points	35	December 2015
Enhanced country level synergistic implementation of MEAs, resulting from UNEP support	Countries adopting practices integrating more than one MEA obligation	20	December 2015

Environmental Governance Expected Accomplishment 1: **Coherence and synergies**: the United Nations system and multilateral environmental agreements, respecting the mandates of each entity, demonstrate increasing coherence and synergy of actions on environmental issues



II-2. Law and Environment Outlook (LEO) project

A.CONTEXT

33. The LEO project responded to calls in the Fourth Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law (Montevideo Programme IV) that requested work on additional tools and e-tools, to support Governments to develop, undertake and strengthen legal and institutional measures. The project would build on the previous efforts and lessons learned particularly by the MEA Information and Knowledge Management Initiative (IKM) which was established in June 2010 with development of the United Nations Information Portal on Multilateral Environmental Agreements (InforMEA), a joint initiative by MEAs. The portal was co-conceptualized by UNEP's Division of Environmental Law and Conventions (DELIC). In addition to InforMEA, the project also aimed at creating interoperability with ECOLEX – a Gateway to Environmental Law- collaboration between UNEP, IUCN and FAO. Lastly, the project intended to incorporate DELIC's electronic overview of the internationally negotiated Global Environment Goals.
34. The challenges that the initiative aimed to address are the proliferation of governance processes , and complexities of policy coordination at global level, given the large number of MEAs, information overload, difficulty of countries with limited capacities to keep track, complex reporting requirements and an aim to build a strong unique body of International Environmental Law ¹⁴
35. Since 2010, UNEP has supported the InforMEA IKM initiative, which currently includes more than 50 international and regional legally binding instruments from 19 Secretariats hosted by four UN organizations and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). InforMEA cooperates on knowledge management to support parties, maintaining a one stop web portal on MEAs promoting common standards, enhancing the technical expertise in MEA secretariats.¹⁵
36. InforMEA harvests COP decisions and resolutions, news, events, MEA membership, national focal points, national reports and implementation plans from MEA secretariats and organizes this information around a set of agreed terms. In 2013 the InforMEA project received funds from the European Union through the Environment and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (ENRTP) process for the enhancement and further development of InforMEA and related knowledge tools. Initial plans for a new law and environment outlook were later adjusted to Law and Environment ontology of the InforMEA, the so called the LEO project.
37. The LEO project was approved in November 2013 as a contribution to UNEPs POW 2012-2013 and 2014-2015. The project dovetailed the ENRTP project on InforMEA enhancements.

B.OBJECTIVES AND COMPONENTS

38. The LEO project was designed to support efforts towards greater coherence of implementation and enforcement of International Environmental Laws by harnessing the increased use of internet resources, smart-phones and other hand-held devices, in day-to-day work, proceedings and negotiations.
39. The project aimed to provide countries and stakeholders with improved access and foster increased use of information on environmental laws and conventions obtained through the LEO and InforMEA portals. The initial plan for the LEO project was to produce four outputs, dovetailed on the ENRTP project:
- Enhancement of InforMEA to improve access by stakeholders and MEA parties to MEA decisions, national reports, plans, e-learning material and trade related information (One-Stop Portal)

¹⁴ InforMEA, a joint Initiative by MEAs. Presentation made at the Workshop on synergies among the biodiversity conventions , held in Geneva, 8-11 February 2016

¹⁵ InforMEA, a joint Initiative by MEAs. Presentation made at the Workshop on synergies among the biodiversity conventions , held in Geneva, 8-11 February 2016

- A multi-dimension Thesaurus on Environmental Law and Conventions that is endorsed by a broad range of institutions and sets an internationally accepted semantic standard for Environmental Law and Policy.
- InforMEA (and LEO) tools refined and validated, based on feedback received from workshops and one Community of practice (*Touching the Ground*)
- Law and Environment Outlook to be developed by integrating different tools. This fourth output was merged with the thesaurus during the course of the project, due to insufficient funding and potential duplication.

C. TARGET AREAS/GROUPS

40. The LEO project main stakeholders are MEA secretariats and observer organizations members of the MEA Information and knowledge management (IKM) steering committee or working group members who have been collaborating since 2010. This group includes 19 Secretariats representing more than 50 international and regional legally binding instruments hosted by four UN organizations and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). These contributors are also considered key system users.

41. Other key users include national focal points to MEAs, negotiators, officials tasked with reporting to MEAs, UN country teams, academia and research institutions. Initial design identified the judiciary judges, traders and customs officials as key users, for the trade components that were later dropped. The environment community of all regions is also listed as a key target user.

D. MILESTONES/KEY DATES IN PROJECTS DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

The main project phases are the following:

2011-2012: Conceptualization/proof of concept

2012-2013: Fund raising /project development

2013-2016: InforMEA phase 1 -this project- EU-MEAs UNEP

2016-2018: InforMEA phase 2.

Table II-3 shows the milestones set for progress towards achieving the project outcome.

Table II-3 Project milestones for progress towards achieving the project outcome	Expected Milestone
<i>Milestone 1</i> Overall implementation of the harvesting mechanism (API) enhanced by 20 per cent (technical implementation)	Dec 2013
<i>Milestone 2</i> Introductory course for E-learning facility accessible, feature on national reports and plans accessible,	Jun 2014
<i>Milestone 3</i> First draft of a multi-stakeholder Thesaurus available accessible,	Dec 2014
<i>Milestone 4</i> UNEP LEO interface developed with solid content base as exemplary application of the Thesaurus	June 2015
<i>Milestone 5</i> [Usage of LEO can be demonstrated and increase in percentage of users be shown since its launch	Dec 2015

E. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

42. The InforMEA IKM initiative is co-chaired by CITES and UNEP (DELIC) and governance arrangements involve annual Steering Committee Meetings, regrouping most MEAs, and intersessional Working Group meetings.

43. The partner agreement for InforMEA comprises commitment on common format and schemas for data management; technical interoperability for the harvesting mechanism, semantic interoperability and addition of short eLearning courses. Each of the partners is custodian of data and information of their organizations.

MEA IKM Initiative

- **CBD**
- **CITES**
- **CMS (and AEWA)**
- **Plant Treaty ITPGR-FA**
- **Ramsar**
- **UNESCO-WHC**
- **UNCCD**
- **UNFCCC**
- **Ozone (Montreal Protocol)**
- **Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions**
- **Minamata Convention**
- **[SAICM]**
- **UNECE (5 MEAs)**
- **Regional Sea Conventions**
- **Further regional Conventions (Carpathian, Caspian Sea)**

Observers: EMG, IUCN, UNEP-WCMC, FAO

Contractors: IUCN Law Centre (with FAO) , IUCN Academy, IISD Report Services, Legal Resource Initiative, Eau de Web

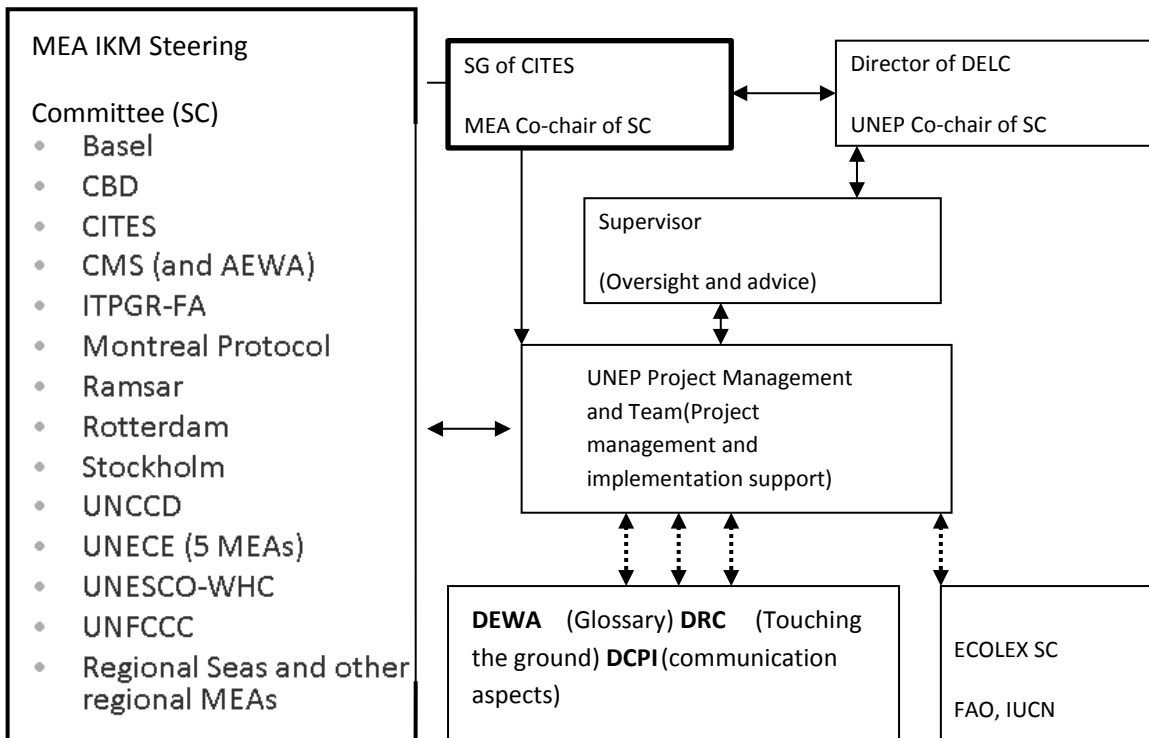
UNEP: DELC IKM Team in Geneva, DEWA, DEPI, DCPI...

Donor: European Union

Promoting collaboration and exchange



InforMEA
UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION PORTAL ON
MULTI-PARTY ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS



44. InforMEA /LEO core team is a central coordination unit reporting through DELC. The project involved partners including the IUCN Environmental Law Centre who undertook preparatory structural work on the ontology to facilitate input from the MEA partners, the Legal Resource Initiative (LRI) in the context of the development of the e-learning tool.

F. PROJECTS FINANCING

45. The approved budget for the LEO project was 2 295 215\$ of which 748 975\$ are UNEP funded project staff and significant in kind contribution from all involved. The project documents indicates least 176 750 \$¹⁶ of in-kind contribution from MEA IKM initiative partners, which represents time involved in working group meeting. The in-kind contribution was later more accurately estimated at 925 725\$.

G. PROJECTS PARTNERS

46. MEA secretariats are both partners and potential beneficiaries. The IUCN Environmental Law Centre (ELC) and IUCN Academy of Environmental Law (AEL) and were the executing institution for the Law and environment Ontology semantic standard, achievement of interoperability between InforMEA and ECOLEX, content review, entry of case law (other than those of ECOLEX) and translation of e-training modules. The Legal Response Initiative was tasked with review of the training manual on international environmental law, the glossaries and definitions of terms. IISD was mandated with outreach material.

H. CHANGES IN DESIGN DURING IMPLEMENTATION

47. The planned outputs were adjusted during the course of the LEO project. The Thesaurus was expanded to an ontology, the scope of the outlook was adjusted to avoid duplication with a new revamped ECOLEX portal by its partners (FAO, IUCN and UNEP). The initially planned user feedback workshop to refine the InforMEA was replaced by targeted user survey and feedback from traffic counts at various stages of project advancement.

48. The amended project¹⁷ consists of four web-based outputs prepared in partnership with some 20 MEA Secretariats and Organisations and refinements based on user feedback: 1. InforMEA Portal enhanced to provide a one-stop access to among other information MEA COP/MOP decisions, national reports and plans; 2. an e-learning course system on MEAs; 3. a multi-stakeholder thesaurus developed to set an internationally accepted semantic standard for environmental law and policy 4 refinements of web-tools based on user feedback, and 5. the law and environment ontology portal development and use integrating different tools with the help of the Thesaurus. The project revision extends the planned ending from December 2015 to June 2016 and announces prospective funding from EC for a next phase.

I. RECONSTRUCTED THEORY OF CHANGE OF THE PROJECT

49. What problematic situation does the project intend to change? What are the preconditions for this change to happen? Who needs to be engaged? Addressing the multiple challenges of MEA proliferation with different governance structures and resulting information overload and implementation gaps, the LEO project aims for greater coherence in implementation and enforcement of international environmental law. This is to be achieved through enhanced access to and use of information on the agreements, COP decisions, national reports and related information. Building on UNEP and partners past efforts to manage knowledge on international law and conventions, the LEO project focused on enriching the information already available with web-based tools produced in partnership with MEA secretariats, host agencies and major groups: An enhanced InforMEA portal providing access to COP decisions, national reports and plans, an internationally accepted semantic standard for

¹⁶ Corresponds to time attending IKM meeting, does not include time spent in data update and contribution.

¹⁷ "Law and Environment Outlook: Web-Tools for the Implementation and Enforcement of International Environmental Law and Internationally Agreed Goals and Targets" Project revision Document approved 21 April 2016

environmental law and policy and an e-learning portal providing access to short courses on MEAs. The search functions are to allow easy access and analysis of decisions. Also key is the Interoperable Programming Application (API) system allowing MEA partners to maintain their own systems while contributing their content automatically to the joint InforMEA system. The project outcome of enhanced access and increased use of information is an important contribution to develop environmental law and convention and strengthen institutions, but clearly not the only prerequisite to successful change in compliance with international law and conventions.

50. There is an assumption that access to enhanced InforMEA and LEO portal and other project outputs will lead to intensified use by stakeholders and to substantial knowledge uptake, increasing institutional capacities for implementation of MEAs, which will improve coherence and enforcement of international environmental law. The implicit drivers of the change and the key dimensions ensuring project success are the following:

- 1) MEA IKM partners regularly contribute relevant up to date content, responding to the needs of stakeholders
- 2) MEA stakeholders are informed about the renewed portal features and understand on how it can support their work. Stakeholder must have a good understanding of the portal features and clearly see how it can support their work in MEA implementation.
- 3) Portal interface is familiar to stakeholder practices
- 4) Up to date infrastructure and maintenance delivered by adequate equipment and supported by fine-tuned software.

Table II-4 LEO Outcome Indicators: (from logical framework in Project Document)

<i>What will change?</i>	<i>Who?</i>	<i>How many? (rev)</i>	<i>By when?</i>
Enhanced knowledge gained from e-learning modules	MEA Stakeholders (National MEA focal points, MEA negotiators, government officials reporting on MEAs, ME secretariats, UN country teams, major groups) and students	30	December 2015
Students use LEO and InforMEA to learn about international law and conventions	Academic institution validation	5	December 2015
Joint initiatives between MEAs on knowledge management and communication	MEA secretariats	3	December 2015
Information on MEA decisions, national reports, plans and other basic content on MEAs is more accessible to stakeholders	National MEA focal points, MEA negotiators, government officials reporting on MEAs, ME secretariats, UN country teams, major groups	100	December 2015
Partners agree on internationally accepted semantic standard for environmental law and policy	Partner institutions endorsement	3	June 2015

Environmental Governance Expected Accomplishment 2: Law: the capacity of countries to develop and enforce laws and strengthen institutions to achieve internationally agreed environmental objectives and goals and comply with related obligations is enhanced.

Project Outcome:
Countries and stakeholders have improved access to and are increasingly using information on environmental law and conventions obtained through LEO (and inforMEA)

MEA stakeholders are aware of InforMEA and LEO renewed portal features and contents

Dr 2

Internationally accepted semantic standard for environmental law and policy

Dr 1

Stakeholders acquire new knowledge from MEA learning modules

As & Dr 1,2

Enhanced InforMEA offering access to MEA decisions, national reports and related information

Dr 1,3,4

Elearning portal on MEAs is operational

Dr 1,3,4

II-3. Biodiversity MEA synergy Project:

A.CONTEXT

51. In response to a mandate provided by the Governing Council of UNEP in 2012, UNEP launched the project entitled “Improving the effectiveness of and cooperation among biodiversity-related conventions and exploring opportunities for further synergies”.
52. The Biodiversity MEA synergy Project approved January 2014 was initially planned in two phases: a first one ending in December 2015 and a second with a planned completion in December 2017. The project was revised to be completed in December 2015, because of a lack of secured funding, with the exception of one output to be carried through to the second session of the UNEA (UNEA-2) held in May 2016. A second phase is expected to proceed following the UNEA-2.

B.OBJECTIVES AND COMPONENTS

53. The two year project aimed at improving the efficiency, enhance coordination and cooperation, promote policy coherence and explore the opportunities for further synergies at all levels of the six major biodiversity-related conventions, while recognizing the autonomous decision-making authority of each of the MEAs conference of parties. Ref Box 1.¹⁸ Based on a 2012 UNEP WCMC paper on promoting synergies¹⁹, the project would identify further opportunities and ways to enhance cooperation between UNEP, other host institutions and the secretariats of the biodiversity-related MEAs.
54. The first key output of the project is an Options Paper, the outcome document of two international expert meetings, setting out options for enhancing cooperation in implementing biodiversity-related conventions, with actions identified for various actors. Although focusing on the global level, the paper also includes options addressing Parties to the biodiversity-related conventions and governments in general. It was intended to provide input to discussions and decisions taken by members of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) at its second session planned in May 2016.
55. The second major output was to focus on cooperation at the national and regional levels, and is consolidated in the UNEP Sourcebook²⁰. Launched in June 2015 at the Ramsar Convention COP 12, the sourcebook was to provide NFPs of the biodiversity-related conventions and other stakeholders working on these conventions with options to achieve enhanced implementation of the conventions through strengthening cooperation at regional and national levels. The process of producing the options paper involved a series of consultations and workshops, drawing upon expertise and experience from national, regional and international stakeholders on synergies in “*programmatic*”, institutional and the administrative areas of the MEAs.
56. The Biodiversity MEA Synergy Project would also provide additional support to on-going initiatives for the revisions of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), with financial and substantive content contributions to a dedicated Web portal - NBSAP forum. Support was to focus on collaboration among MEAs and integration into development sectors, as called for in the Strategic plan for biodiversity 2011-2020 including the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.
57. Channelled to decision processes of UNEA and governing bodies of biodiversity-related conventions at global level and national processes of countries and relevant regional organization, the combined products of the project and

¹⁸ BOX 1 is extracted from UNEP –WCMC 2015 Sourcebook of opportunities for enhancing cooperation among the biodiversity – related conventions at national and regional levels.

¹⁹ UNEP –WCMC 2012 *Promoting synergies within the cluster of biodiversity –related multilateral environmental agreements*

²⁰ UNEP (2015) Sourcebook of opportunities for enhancing cooperation among the Biodiversity-related Conventions at national and regional levels. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Nairobi, Kenya. Available online: <http://wcmc.io/sourcebook-web>

their translation to on the ground actions would lead to more efficient and effective implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions.

BOX 1: THE BIODIVERSITY-RELATED CONVENTIONS

The Biodiversity-related Conventions are the conventions that are members of the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions (BLG) (Box 3)². As of February 2015 seven MEAs are members of the BLG. The seventh member, the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), joined the BLG in September 2014 and thus substantively after the start of this project. The Sourcebook therefore mainly focuses on the other six Biodiversity-related Conventions; however, there are also selected references to the IPPC.



Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Host institution: UNEP

Date entering into force: 29th of December 1993.
Main objective(s): To conserve biological diversity, ensure the sustainable use of the components of biological diversity and ensure the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources.
Website: <http://www.cbd.int/>



Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Host institution: UNEP

Date entering into force: 1st of July 1975.
Main objective(s): To ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.
Website: <http://www.cites.org/>



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) Host institution: UNEP

Date entering into force: 24th of June 1982.
Main objective(s): The conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats.
Website: <http://www.cms.int/>



The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) Host institution: The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

Date entering into force: 29th of June 2004.
Main objective(s): The conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture; ensure the fair and equitable sharing of benefits derived from their use, in harmony with the CBD, for sustainable agriculture and food security; recognizes the enormous contribution of farmers to the diversity of crops that feed the world.
Website: <http://www.planttreaty.org/>



Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention) Host institution: The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

Date entering into force: 21st of December 1975
Main objective(s): The conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local, regional and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world.
Website: <http://www.ramsar.org/>



Convention concerning the protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (WHC) Host institution: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO

Date entering into force: 17th of December 1975
Main objective(s): Identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of cultural and natural heritage of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).
Website: <http://whc.unesco.org/>



The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) Host institution: FAO

Date entering into force: 3rd of April 1952.
Main objective(s): To protect world plant resources, including cultivated and wild plants by preventing the introduction and spread of plant pests and promoting the appropriate measures for their control.
Website: <https://www.ippc.int/>

58. ² This Sourcebook uses the terms 'Conventions' and 'Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs)' although the

C. TARGET AREAS/GROUPS

59. Key targets of the Biodiversity MEA synergies project are national biodiversity MEA focal points (Biodiversity NFPs). The project involved a survey of Biodiversity NFPs and other national and international experts, carried out in 2014. The survey questionnaire was crafted by UNEP WCMC with the assistance of MEA secretariats to reach the national focal points of six biodiversity conventions and the GEF and other stakeholders with expertise and experience in implementation. The survey focused on benefits and main barriers in existing mechanisms of cooperation assisting NFP with coherent implementation of multiple biodiversity related conventions and collating good practice examples. The survey results were shared by presentation and an invitation for feedback in the margins of COP meetings. DELC also carried out a survey of interested parties followed by expert workshops and peer reviews targeting better synergies in programmatic, institutional and administrative areas of biodiversity MEAs.

D. MILESTONES/KEY DATES IN PROJECTS DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

60. An articulated plan of implementation of four outputs and respective work packages was prepared by WCMC and illustrating key milestones.

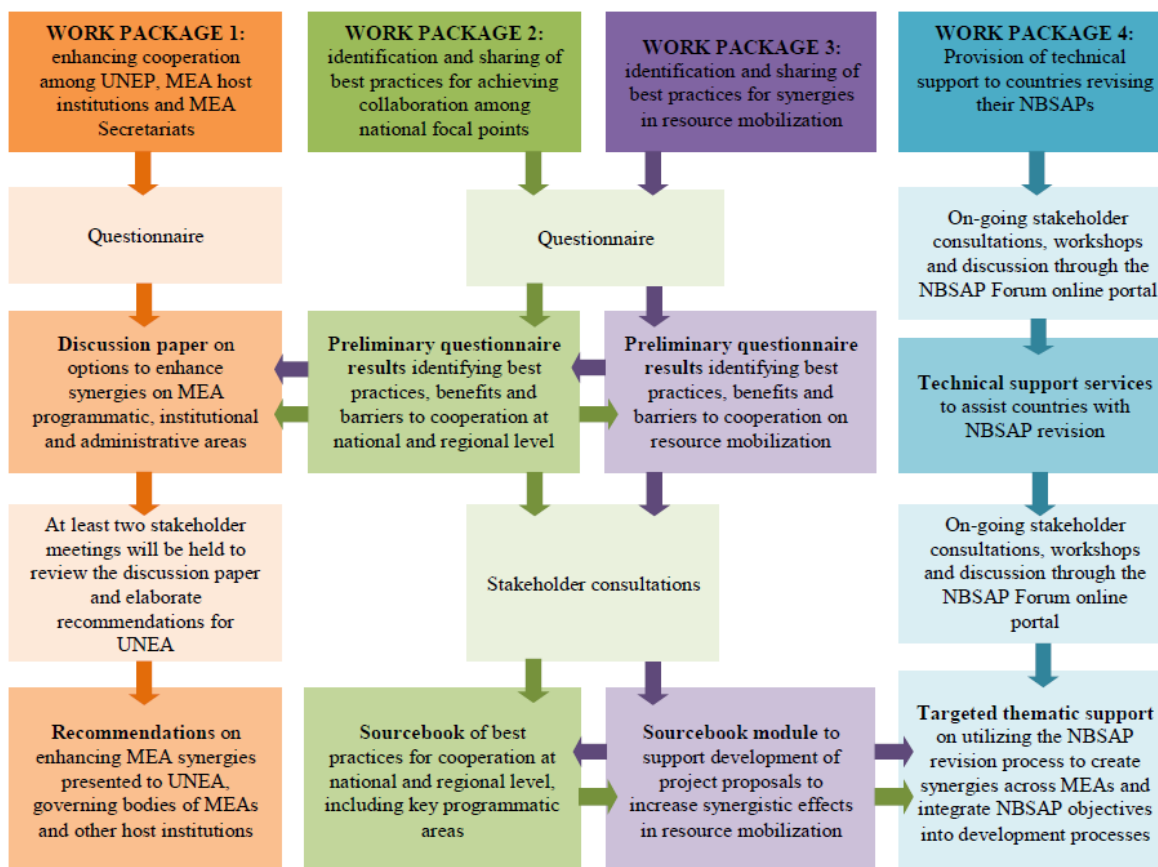
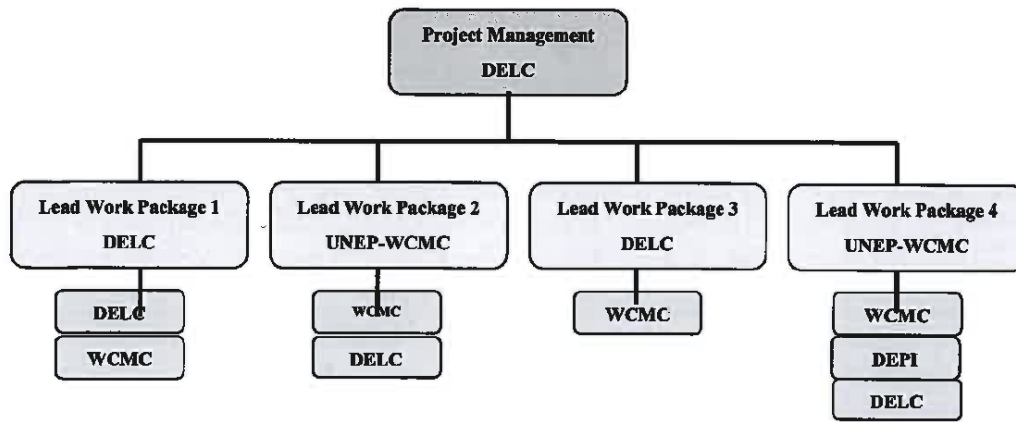


Figure 1: Main outputs of the four work packages

E. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

61. DELC managed the project which was executed by WCMC. The WCMC took the lead on the Sourcebook, while DELC focused mainly on the Options paper.



F. PROJECTS FINANCING

62. The total project budget was 2 598 600\$ of which 1 408 209\$ was to cover project staff costs, 526 340\$ for contracting (namely with WCMC), a sum of 741 175\$ to cover meeting costs and 116 749\$ for reporting costs. (Table A4-3). The EC EN RTP funding (1 209 505\$) covered 46.5 % of financing. Additional co-financing was provided by Switzerland 380 407\$ and Finland 50 000\$. The Environment Fund contributed 632 425 \$ some 600 000\$ towards staff costs and the balance towards activities.

G. PROJECTS PARTNERS

63. The main implementation partner was UNEP WCMC (reporting to DELC). MEA secretariats were both partners and beneficiaries.

H. CHANGES IN DESIGN DURING IMPLEMENTATION

64. The project was initially planned to be carried out in two phases, with no funding secured for the second phase. A project revision modified introducing a project end to reflect secured financing. The outputs related to NBSAPs were consequently dropped (outputs 4.1 & 4.2 in initial Pro doc²¹). The six outputs of the first three work packages were combined into the main two outputs: the Options paper and the Sourcebook.

I. RECONSTRUCTED THEORY OF CHANGE OF THE PROJECT

65. What problematic situation does the project intend to change? What are the preconditions for this change to happen? Who needs to be engaged? In brief, in a context where Institutional fragmentation and duplication of obligation for member states are among the causes of MEA implementation gaps, the biodiversity MEA synergies project seeks improved coordination and cooperation for more effectiveness, coherence and synergies in the implementation of the six major biodiversity related MEAs at global, regional and country level. The project aimed for changes in implementation arrangements between UNEP, MEA secretariats and national MEA focal points (NFPs). This change would stem from a common understanding of ways to improve institutional and programmatic effectiveness and efficiencies. National and regional cooperation and synergies would be encouraged and facilitated by capturing and sharing effective experiences of institutional arrangements, information management and reporting, namely on the review and implementation process of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAP). To this end the project was to produce i) a paper on options for enhancing synergies among biodiversity-related conventions to be channelled in global decision processes to the UNEA, ii) a Sourcebook for use by NFPs capturing ways for improved cooperation and coordination on institutional arrangements, information management and reporting, science-policy interface, NBSAP revisions and financial resource mobilization and use and iii) and offer

²¹ Project revision.

support to practice on NBSAPs, through a web platform and community of practice, knowledge exchange and web based advisory services.

66. There are clearly a large number of substantive changes and steps to complete between the intended project outcomes and the expected accomplishments of coherence and synergy in policy for MEA implementation. The pathways entail enhancing collaborative arrangements between parties for addressing issues, refining policy and related institutional and organizational arrangement needed for the substantive on the ground changes called for in MEA provisions. These required change pathways are largely beyond the project design.

67. The explicit assumptions in project design were the following:

- Increased awareness of potential for synergies on resource mobilisation and strengthening capacities leads to actions.
- Support to NBSAP as the institutional instrument for advances in policy and practice is maintained across the biodiversity MEAs
- Countries maintain political will to enhance synergies for improved implementation of MEAs
- NBSAP review process increases engagement of stakeholders from a diversity of sectors
- Lack of financial resources is an obstacle to cooperation among national focal points

68. The implicit drivers of change are that :

- 1) National biodiversity focal points of the different biodiversity conventions are effectively engaged, participate in identifying solutions for improving cooperation in implementation of biodiversity MEAs and in taking action on the synergy areas documented in the sourcebook, working collaboratively with their in country peers as well as engaging stakeholders of other development sectors.
- 2) MEA secretariats' and national biodiversity focal points' continual engagement to cooperation in MEA implementation, NBSAP as vehicle for national policy direction and synergies.
- 3) UNEP effectively communicates potential solutions influencing decision processes of UNEA and COPs
- 4) UNEP mobilises technical knowledge and leadership skills to incite adoption of synergy practices in MEA implementation.

KEY TERMS RELATED TO COOPERATION

- Coordination: the organization of the different elements of a complex body or activity so as to enable them to work together effectively and without duplication (within an organization or among organizations/ different actors)
- Collaboration: working with someone to produce a discrete output
- Cooperation: working together towards a common aim or objective
- Synergies: linking processes in a way that increases the effects of the sum of the joint activities beyond the sum of individual activities, and thus making efforts more effective and efficient²²

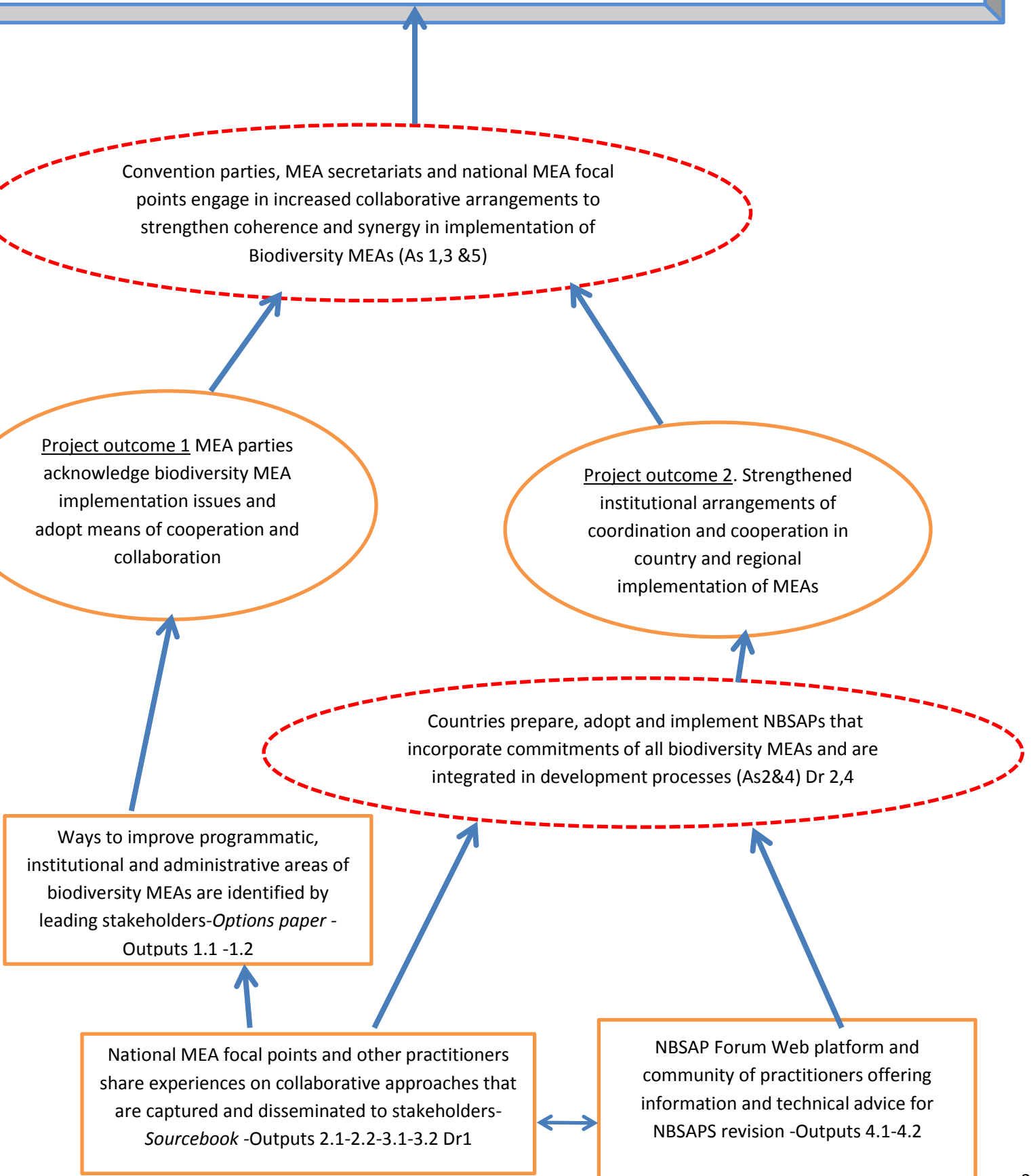
Table II-5 Biodiversity MEA synergy Project Outcome Indicators (from Project documents²³)

²² Extracted from sourcebook... page ...

²³ Prodocs refers to Project document with revisions following PRC review and 2014 project revision.

<i>What will change? Number of:</i>	<i>Who?</i>	<i>How many?</i>	<i>By when?</i>
Decisions of MEA COPs and UNEA informed by Options paper (analysis of issues and ways to improve programmatic, institutional and administrative areas of biodiversity MEAs).	MEA COPs, UNEA	3	Dec 2015
UNEP and MEA secretariats engage in collaborative arrangements for increased synergies among biodiversity MEAs	UNEP MEA secretariats	At least 2	Dec 2015
Collaborative regional actions for MEA implementation	Countries via national MEA focal points and regional facilitation (Africa Caribbean, Pacific- MEAs)	2	Dec 2015
Countries preparing and adopting NBSAPs that incorporate commitments of all biodiversity MEAs and are integrated in development processes (new NBASP as per Aichi strategy) with UNEP support	Countries via the national biodiversity focal points	5	Dec 2015

Environmental Governance Expected Accomplishment 1: **Coherence and synergies**: the United Nations system and multilateral environmental agreements, respecting the mandates of each entity, demonstrate increasing coherence and synergy of actions on environmental issues



III. EVALUATION FINDINGS

A. STRATEGIC RELEVANCE

69. The three projects address components of environmental governance that are critical to advancing MEA implementation: ensuring regional presence and support to countries; systematizing information on international environmental laws and conventions, and demystifying the possibilities of synergies for more effective implementation of biodiversity MEAs. The shared objectives of the projects to advance coherence and synergy in implementation of MEAs respond to the recognized issue of MEA institutional fragmentation, overwhelming requirements of MEA implementation on developing countries, disconnect between UNEP and MEA secretariat work on MEAs, and, the resulting implementation gap.
70. Coherence and synergies are strategic principles for environmental governance. Synergy is achieved when components of a system (such as policy, institutional mechanism or practice) are combined and result in effects that exceed the sum of the individual effects. In practice, coherence and synergies are achieved via coordination, collaboration and cooperation of key actors. Synergies -institutional, programmatic, or administrative- make practices and actions more effective and efficient. The three projects are of strategic relevance in their effort to promote and achieve coherence and synergies in MEA implementation. The projects are complementary with links and some cross fertilisation between them, yet the deliberate planned synergies among the three projects were limited, which lessens their strategic relevance.
71. The three projects clearly cover areas of UNEP mandate and respond to the Medium Term Strategy of UNEP for the period 2010-2013 and 2014-2017 and the corresponding Programmes of Work (POW). They contribute to the POW on environmental governance and to the Environmental Governance Sub-programme. The Regional MEA focal point and biodiversity MEA synergy projects were intended as “technical support” provided to governments to facilitate coherence and synergy in the implementation of MEAs. In the theory of change for the sub-programme²⁴, the LEO project contributes to *Enhanced capacity of countries to develop and enforce laws and strengthen institutions to achieve internationally agreed environmental objectives and goals and comply with related obligations* i.e. Expected accomplishment B: *Law*: The LEO project design is also a collaborative arrangement between UNEP and MEA secretariats and as such an example of coherence and synergies, although not specifically identified as a precondition in the TOC of the environmental governance sub-programme.
72. With respect to the alignment of the projects with the ENRTP Strategic Cooperation Agreement (SCA), there is a convergence between the UNEP programme of work and the ENRTP which, under the terms of the agreement, have similar priorities. The three projects are the only DELC projects financed by the ENRTP. Some suggested that the MEA synergy focus of the projects was strongly advocated and initiated by the EU. There is no explicit reference to this in the SCA agreement, nor is there in the minutes of meetings of the ENRTP Programme Steering Committee. There is no evidence that the SCA financing contributed to focusing actions, geographic coverage and the project beneficiaries. Some interviewees deem the ENRTP process of project financing as being non-transparent.
73. The projects were designed and planned before adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their targets. The relevance of the projects to the SDGs is recognized mainly in the Biodiversity MEA Synergy Project. The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development encourages parties to the biodiversity-related conventions to consider further measures, in those and other clusters, as appropriate, to promote policy coherence at all relevant levels, improve efficiency, reduce unnecessary overlap and duplication and enhance coordination and cooperation among biodiversity-related conventions.²⁵ Decisions of the governing bodies of the half-dozen major biodiversity-related conventions call for enhancing cooperation and synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions (table III-1).

²⁴ Environmental Governance Sub-Programme 4 UNEP Programme of Work 2016-2017

²⁵ Paragraph 89 of outcome document entitled “The future we want”.

Biodiversity goals and targets are specifically included in the SDGs agenda built on principles of integration and inter-relationships. The role of the CBD in representing all of the biodiversity MEAs in the process of consultations and negotiations on SDGs is regarded as very effective cooperation among MEA secretariats. This was not the direct result of the three projects. The structural policy role of the SDGs is not fully acknowledged by all biodiversity actors.

74. Several partners have stressed the importance of better linking any future phases of the projects to the overarching sustainable development agenda. Some LEO partners requested for InforMEA to map their contribution to the SDGs, demonstrating the relevance of their actions. The biodiversity dimension of the SDGs have been highlighted in later outputs of the Biodiversity MEA synergies project, namely in a webinar on the relevance of biodiversity to SDGs and the opportunities to expand synergies among MEAs to better achieve the SDGs and in preparation to the second UNEA. Some have suggested SDGs is a gift to biodiversity synergies, mainstreaming and advancement, yet were concerned about the lack of concerted leadership in working with the SDG agenda.
75. The project documents of all three projects include a brief section on project alignment with UNEP policies and strategies regarding the Bali Strategic Plan (BSP) on capacity development, gender balance, human rights and indigenous people, South-South cooperation and safeguards. The South-South Cooperation workshop on NBSAPs and synergies in the context of the ACP MEAs project, a follow up to the Biodiversity MEA synergies project, held in Nairobi in March 2016 is the only example found of South-South cooperation. There was some effort of gender disaggregated data in survey and reporting of users of InforMEA and on reporting on some of the meetings and workshops facilitated by the MEA regional focal points, although no evidence of effort in selection of workshop participants to ensure gender balance. The evaluator found no other evidence that this reference to BSP, gender balance, HRBA, and safeguards is beyond paper talk.
76. In the design and planning of all three projects the impact drivers and assumptions were vaguely identified, and not for specific causal pathways. The implicit drivers and assumptions were outlined in the reconstructed TOC (sections II-I). Monitoring of progress of the projects was limited to cursory qualifiers in UNEP PIMS and both quarterly and annual ENRTP reports. No mid-term evaluations or reviews (MTE/R) were carried out on any of the projects, although they were initially planned.
77. Although generally recognized that enabling country level actions are priority needs, this is not explicit in all the global project actions. The strategic relevance of each of the three projects to the work of MEAs secretariat is further discussed in respective sections below, as is the relevance to national stakeholders.

Strategic relevance of Regional MEA Focal Point Project

78. Reinforcing UNEP active regional presence fills a critical piece of the organization's capacities to support national implementation and strengthen global decisions and actions on MEAs based on lessons learned from country implementation. The regional MEA focal point project contributed to this overall objective. The eight MEA secretariats interviewed for this evaluation are unanimous on the relevance of UNEP regional presence supporting MEAs, as were, UNEP staff.
79. The evidence of relevance is further with MEA secretariats that are without regional or country implementation support structures (such as CBD, CITES and CMS) as they benefited from the services of regionally based focal points to advance their work in the regions. CBD officers and management, Nagoya ABS and Biosafety Protocol, CITES and CMS were united on the benefit of this regional support. The MEA regional focal points project was instrumental in contributing to the MEA implementation objectives, as confirmed in the agreement letter between CBD and UNEP²⁶ and the 2012 joint work planning with CITES and CMS²⁷. In terms of outlining the specific needs and planning of the

²⁶ Memorandum to Executive secretary of CBD from Executive Director UNEP dated 12 September 2012 on Areas of enhanced collaboration between CBD secretariat and UNEP.

²⁷ Biodiversity MEA focal point briefing and planning mission to CITES, CMS and RAMSAR Convention Secretariats (11-15 June 2012) agenda and joint planning tentative lists.

support services, several CBD officers indicated that it was ad hoc rather than programmed as they are function of irregular funding, and of COP decisions. The fact that collaborative arrangements were unplanned and often ad hoc with no links to facilitating institutional mechanisms weakens the strategic nature of this support.

80. Key representatives of MEA secretariats described the UNEP posting of MEA focal points as indispensable and a rare example of UNEP initiatives that help support implementation of the conventions. Some doubted the strategic relevance and effectiveness of having a single focal point in a region carry the flag of the huge scope of MEA implementation. They suggested the entire UNEP regional office rather than only one focal point should assume the mandate of supporting MEA implementation. Others reminded that most of the norm setting standards and policies originate from the MEA secretariats rather than from UNEP. Similar conclusions were reached by the task team looking at administrative and programmatic cooperation between UNEP and MEAs that recommended stable and coherent programmatic collaboration between relevant MEAs and UNEP and that future UNEP programmes of work include implementation of MEA COP decisions²⁸. UNEA-2 resolution called for mutually supportive programmes of work between UNEP and the MEAs in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.²⁹
81. The strategic relevance is perceived differently by BRS joint secretariats. The existing regional network support, either from national implementation partners, the 23 regional centres on chemical and waste, dedicated regional focal points based in their headquarter offices (5 in BRS and 4 Ramsar) and/ or effective country parties all offer alternatives for regional outreach and actions of MEA secretariats. They nonetheless acknowledge the helpful execution support provided by the MEA focal points, in for example, organizing workshops and pre-COP meetings.
82. The Regional MEA focal points project supported further progress in the some specific areas tackled by UNEP work on hazardous chemicals and wastes sub-programmes. MEA Focal Points were instrumental in organizing the preparatory work for country briefings and adoption of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, although again the strategic relevance was uncertain, given the essence of the work was mainly logistical rather than strategic political advocacy.
83. All those involved, described the regional MEA focal points as useful connectors between countries and the MEA secretariats, eyes and ears to better assess regional and country needs, skilful advisors on MEA ratification, trustworthy representatives of MEAs in regional meetings. Overall technical competence, relational and local language skills of MEA focal points were recognized as bridging the weak link between countries and MEA secretariats.
84. The project end, in December 2015, was disappointing to MEA biodiversity secretariats who appreciated the regional focal points backstopping MEA work in the regions. The new arrangements for biodiversity regional coordinator within the Ecosystem Management subprogram are considered less effective to support MEA secretariats. Many of the former regional focal points have pursued their work as regional coordinators for ecosystem management. Former biodiversity MEA focal points confirmed they had less availability for dedicated MEA support. Some see with regret, less opportunity to support MEA work specifically, others picture opportunities to further advance programming and expand partnerships and scope of work beyond MEAs and related NFP.
85. MEA secretariats consider that for all intended purposes, the regional MEA focal points system no longer exists. Why UNEP dropped this opportunity is unclear and frustrating to MEA secretariats. They were disappointed by the decision, as this was considered a good investment and effective UNEP initiative. MEA secretariats indicated that they will find other ways to respond to the need and that this issue is being discussed at the Biodiversity Liaison Group (BLG). Asked what they would have done if the MEA regional focal points had not been in place to help to

²⁸ Report of the task team on Cooperation between UNEP and MEAs Second meeting of CPR document UNEP/EA2/7/add3 February 2016

²⁹ Relationship between the United Nations Environment Programme and the multilateral environmental agreements for which it provides the secretariat. UNEP/EA.2/L.20. Limited distribution 23 May 2016

support their work, MEA secretariat responded that they would have searched for support within the UN family of organizations, preferred to working with regional organizations.

86. The relevance of the project with respect to country partners' needs remains unclear and one sided. MEA secretariats consider that the Regional focal point system prepared the NFPs for upcoming negotiations, yet there was no country stakeholder consultation and there is no direct feedback by national focal points. In regions such as West Asia where there are few regional organizations the strategic relevance is stronger as it is filling a larger gap. Overall the relevance of the project to country partners is one sided and uncertain given the unqualified demand and limited offer of support services.
87. In brief, most MEA secretariats recognize the strategic relevance of the project. There were however issues in the actual implementation of the project affecting its performance, namely the lack of clarity in the mechanism for collaboration and the absence of funds to deliver basic services (section F below). These issues in rolling out the project reduced its strategic relevance.

Strategic relevance of LEO project

88. The collaborative work of the LEO project bringing together MEA secretariats to produce multi organizational information and knowledge bases is an example of synergies to advance implementation of international law and conventions. Project partners interviewed were unanimous on the unprecedented high added- value of the technical interoperability of data and information with the Application Programming Interface (API) tool and usefulness of the harmonization of terminology. All partners interviewed outlined the benefits of the project partnership for their own organization. The fact that InforMEA is a multi-organization initiative made possible with UNEP leadership, without UNEP branding, and centralized control, augments its strategic relevance. The project design with the interoperability, and related partnership arrangements with each of the MEA maintaining custody of data and information and their own operating system has built-in incentives fostering collaborative arrangements between MEAs and producing value-added integrated tools.
89. The project is of relevance to MEAs as it is actually born out of their commitment to bring together their data and information, offering value added information for advancing coherence in MEAs. The project is considered by several MEA secretariats as the most successful and relevant of the three, as it responded to MEA secretariat need, was designed collectively and its ownership is a shared responsibility.
90. Whether or not InforMEA and LEO responds to a country need and those of national focal points in particular remains a partly open question. Project documents had detailed target audience with respective roles and potential use of InforMEA by negotiators, academia, research institutions, MEA national focal points, MEA secretariats, Country Officials reporting on MEAs, judges, traders and custom officials, contributors and colleagues in MEA secretariats, UN Country teams, and environment community at large. However other than those of MEA partners, the stakeholder needs and priorities appear assumed. There is no mention of consultation on additional information needs. Some partners consider that inforMEA and the LEO were mainly intended for secretariat rather than country use, although NFP and other country actors are identified as key users in project documents. Use by NFP is so far limited. Only 30% of NFP are using InforMEA a few times a year and 40% have never used it. Section IV-B on output use provides results of recent user survey.

Strategic relevance of Biodiversity MEA synergies project

91. The Biodiversity MEA synergies project responded to the implementation gap that is a core reason behind the continued biodiversity loss. The project is broadly answering to UNEP Governing Council 2012 decision SSXII.3 on international environmental Governance inviting the executive director to undertake, as appropriate, further activities to improve the effectiveness of and cooperation among biodiversity conventions, as well as to COP decisions of key Biodiversity MEAs encouraging country level cooperation and synergies in the implementation of the conventions. (Table III-1). Some MEA secretariat representatives felt that its strategic relevance is lessened by the lack of focus on specific country level implementation gaps that prevent advances on the Aichi targets. Others felt that UNEP working on enhancing synergies among the biodiversity MEA secretariats is not relevant, because of mutually exclusive legal mandates of MEA secretariats and existing well-functioning cooperation mechanisms

among biodiversity MEA secretariats. There is a prevailing sense in MEA biodiversity secretariats that integrating biodiversity issues in development plans and decisions is a more relevant strategic need.

92. Some MEA secretariats representatives consider that the biodiversity synergies project had little strategic value as both the option paper and source book repeated what has already been done by the MEA secretariats and did not respond to a need expressed by the MEA secretariats, nor the parties. The objectives were not very ambitious; more innovation was expected. Comments from some participants in a CBD workshop on synergies and the comments in the CPR meeting also questioned the strategic relevance of the initiative. The main reasoning behind this questioning appears to be duplication of work already carried out by MEA community rather than a forward looking novel approach to improve country- level implementation. This weakness is exacerbating an MEA secretariat perception that UNEP is trying to take over MEA secretariat mandates, rather than support value-added initiatives.
93. The CITES secretariat pointed out that there was no request from CITES parties for an options paper, nor on the sourcebook. There is a distinction made between synergy of global actions considered to be well achieved and synergies at regional and country level. It is unclear to what extent the initiative is party driven, which was a key lesson of the 2012 WCMC work on what is needed for successful synergies.
94. NBSAPs are accepted by all MEA secretariats and countries as a key institutional vehicle for more effective country level implementation and change in biodiversity management. The emphasis on NBSAP as a key country level tool which can integrate several biodiversity MEA obligations is of strategic relevance. The added value of the project with respect to NBSAPs other than reaffirming support is unclear and questioned. NBSAPs were instigated more than a decade ago, and are supported by CBD secretariat with financing from related GEF and Japan funds.
95. Did the Biodiversity MEA synergies project respond to what countries need and expect from UNEP on implementation of MEAs? The UNEA 2 resolution welcoming the results of the project and inviting the governing bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions to further strengthen their cooperation and consider the results of the project, is evidence in support of a positive answer to this question.³⁰
96. The project involved a survey of Biodiversity NFP and other national and international experts, referred to as the UNEP survey 2014. The survey focused on benefits and main barriers in existing mechanisms of cooperation assisting NFP with coherent implementation of multiple biodiversity related conventions and collating good practice examples, rather than on country needs. The survey questionnaire obtained 139 responses from 88 countries, with some 120 responses from NFP. The two preparatory meetings for the option paper involved respectively 6 and 9 country focal points. A later survey of capacity development needs carried out in the context of the CBD Geneva meeting showed that almost 50% had already participated in capacity development activities focused on synergies and cooperation in implementation of biodiversity MEAs. The level of participation in the Sourcebook and the examples suggest interest in a growing country level practice and the strategic relevance of sharing practice examples.

³⁰ Enhancing the work of the United Nations Environment Programme in facilitating cooperation, collaboration and synergies among biodiversity-related conventions. UNEP /EA2/L19/rev1 limited distribution May 2016

MEA	Decision/ Resolution (Year)	Decision/ Resolution Text
CBD	XII/6 (2014)	<i>“Encourages Parties to improve cooperation among Biodiversity-related Conventions and other organizations at all levels to enhance effectiveness and efficiency in the implementation of the objectives of the Convention;”</i>
	XI/6 (2012)	<i>“Encourages Parties to further strengthen cooperation and synergy among convention focal points and focal points for other relevant processes and partners at the national level so as to enhance capacity to implement the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets”</i>
	X/20 (2010)	<i>“Urges Parties to establish close collaboration at the national level between the focal points for the CBD and focal points for other relevant conventions, with a view to developing coherent and synergetic approaches across the conventions at national and (sub-) regional levels”</i>
CITES	16.4 (2013)	<i>“Recommends that Parties further strengthen the cooperation, coordination and synergies among the focal points of the biodiversity-related convention: and other partners at the national level to enhance coherent national level implementation of the Convention”</i>
CMS	11.10 (2014)	<i>“Urges Parties to establish close collaboration at the national level between the focal point of the CMS and the focal points of other relevant conventions: in order for Governments to develop coherent and synergistic approaches across the conventions and increase effectiveness of national efforts, for example by developing national biodiversity working groups to coordinate the work of focal points of relevant MEAs and other stakeholders inter alia through relevant measures in NBSAPs, harmonized national reporting and adoption of coherent national positions in respect of each MEA.”</i>
	10.25 (2011)	<i>“Further encourages interested Parties to enhance collaboration with NFPs for the CBD and GEF to implement the options available under the existing GEF structure ... and specifically to: ... c) enhance collaboration at National Focal Point level d) integrate relevant objectives into support for National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAP)s.”</i>
ITPGRFA	8/2011 (2011)	<i>“Requests the NFPs of the Treaty to enhance their collaboration and coordination with their counterpart NFPs for the CBD on all relevant processes, in particular on the Nagoya Protocol and the Strategic Plan”</i>
Ramsar Convention	XI/6 (2012)	<i>“URGES Contracting Parties to take active steps at national level to improve regular liaison and collaboration among... the focal points of related conventions and agreements, including as appropriate through their inclusion in National Ramsar/Wetland Committees, in order to ensure that national responses to global environmental issues will be as consistent as possible with the objectives and values of the Ramsar Convention;”</i>
<p>Even though not specifically addressing NFPs, it is acknowledged that the World Heritage Committee adopted decisions to encourage synergies between MEAs. For example Decision 37 COM 5A, adopted at its 37th session (Phnom Penh, 2013) reads in paragraph 8: <i>“Also encourages the World Heritage Centre to continue its cooperation with the BLG to create further synergies between the conventions, as well as the joint activities initiated with the Secretariats of the CITES, Ramsar Convention and the Council of Europe, and further requests States Parties to ensure their NBSAPs fully consider the importance of natural World Heritage sites to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.”</i></p>		

B. ACHIEVEMENT OF OUTPUTS

97. The outputs of the three projects are mainly tangible products capturing the results of the process engagement with stakeholders. For the most part, they are easily verifiable in the form of a knowledge product such as the renewed

InforMEA portal, the LEO Ontology/thesaurus and the e-learning platform resulting from the LEO project. Key outputs of the Biodiversity MEA synergies project are the paper *Elaboration of options for enhancing synergies among biodiversity-related conventions* –referred to as the Options paper and the *Sourcebook of opportunities for cooperation among the biodiversity-related MEAs*. Services, such as the technical support services provided by regional MEA focal points to MEA secretariats, are also project outputs. The major planned outputs of each of the three projects are shown on the respective reconstructed TOCs and are outlined in the corresponding sections II- I. Table III-2 presents the planned outputs as per the respective latest project revision document and the actual realized outputs. Notes indicate adjustments made from outputs of initial project document.

Table III-2 Planned and realized outputs of the three projects

Planned project outputs	Realised outputs	Notes
REGIONAL MEA FOCAL POINT PROJECT ³¹		
1.Improved partnership between MEA secretariats and parties in successful implementation of the MEA plans and activities through facilitation of the MEA focal points	MEA focal points facilitated substantive and organisational dimensions of numerous meetings and workshops convened by MEAs and UNEP, mainly biodiversity related	
2A. Regional and sub-regional action plans and strategies to implement MEAs developed/updated in cooperation with MEA secretariats and countries	Initiatives grouping countries of a given region. Facilitation of regional ministers meetings. No evidence of adopted regional actions plans and strategies	
2B.Technical support and advisory services provided to strengthen MEA implementation	Technical support and advisory services provided on demand to MEA secretariats	
2C Enhanced country level synergistic implementation of MEAs	unclear	No country level evidence of synergies
LEO PROJECT ³²		
A. InforMEA enhanced to improve access by stakeholders and MEA parties to MEA decisions , national reports , plans, e-learning material and trade related information (single window)	Renewed inforMEA portal operational, providing access to multiple information sources on environmental law and conventions	Initially planned single window on trade postponed to future phases
B. An E-learning tool is established in the context of inforMEA in collaboration with MEAs	E-learning tool portal in use offering short courses on MEA topics	
C. Multi-stakeholder thesaurus developed to set an internationally accepted semantic standard for Environmental Law and Policy	An operational law and Environment Ontology portal; Endorsed thesaurus with harmonised terminology	
D. InforMEA and LEO tools refined and validated based on feedback received from workshops and one community of practice (touching the Ground) from Users	User survey initiated to enhance InforMEA based on user feedback	Workshop and community of practice replaced by online survey of users

³¹ As per project document November 2014 revision

³² As per project revision document 21-04-2016

E. The LEO –Law and Environment Outlook developed and used integrating different tools with the help of the thesaurus	LEO Ontology portal of InforMEA used to access national legislation, regional agreements , international decisions an related information	Outlook adjusted to ontology.
MEA Biodiversity synergies ³³		
Discussion paper and recommendations on how to enhance synergies on programmatic, institutional, administrative areas of MEAs work developed, based on the outcomes of a number of consultation processes	Elaboration of options for enhancing synergies among biodiversity –related conventions (Options paper)	Initial project document contained 8 outputs. Six were combined to produce the two main outputs and two outputs on NBSAP support were dropped.
Handbook on approaches to synergise implementation of MEAs at national and regional level published and available in NBSAP Forum for download	Sourcebook of opportunities for cooperation among biodiversity –related conventions	

98. The evaluation of outputs considers the quality and quantity of outputs achieved for each of the three projects as well as their usefulness and timeliness. What makes the outputs high quality? What is the added value from existing products? How are they being used?

Regional MEA Focal Points Project outputs

99. The planned outputs to be achieved from the Regional MEA Focal Points Project were a) collaborative arrangements on MEA implementation between MEA secretariats, UNEP and parties; b) regional and sub-regional action plans and strategies developed or updated with MEA secretariats and countries c) technical support and advisory services provided by UNEP to strengthen MEA implementation and d) joint actions for synergies in national implementation of MEAs.

100. In practice, the regionally based MEA focal points mainly supported regional meetings, training and/or workshops convened by MEAs, UNEP and regional/sub-regional environmental forums on MEA topics. They contributed to producing guidance, technical papers and reports on MEA implementation topics. MEA focal points served as connectors between secretariats of biodiversity and chemicals/waste MEAs and national focal points. MEA biodiversity secretariats stressed that a large number of useful services were provided to them by the regional MEA focal points. For example, some 30 countries were supported by regional focal points in the ratification of the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS). Similarly, regional MEA focal points helped to advance ratification, accession and prepare implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety as well as of CMS. The CBD Secretariat relied on MEA focal points to solicit responses on missing country reporting of progress on implementation of the convention.

101. Another example of technical support services and resulting knowledge product appreciated from CBD Secretariat are the regional supplements to the Global Biodiversity Outlook GBO4. Regional Biodiversity outlook supplements were prepared for West Asia, Africa, Pacific region, and LAC and were launched at the May 2016 UNEA-2. The GBO and its supplements are considered a substantive result of the CBD programme of work expanding its range to advancing better understanding of regional biodiversity issues. This initiative was made possible with CBD co-financing of 50 000\$ to each of the four regions (total 200 000\$. Regional MEA focal points worked as main trusted CBD interlocutors coordinating the work of local centres of expertise. The process supported by MEA focal points is considered as important as the product.

102. Former regional MEA focal points highlighted additional examples of significant knowledge products (guidance or technical papers) resulting from the project listed in table III-3.

³³ As per Project revision Document QAS Synergies4Biodiversity-15_12_14mo_QAS161214_2 (1)Dec 2014- (approved signed document was not provided)

Table III-3 Examples of significant knowledge products resulting from the Regional MEA focal point project
Report on Experiences and Good Practices in China and ASEAN on Biodiversity Planning and Implementation. “Strengthening the Capacity of Southeast Asian Countries for the Implementation of the Biodiversity Strategic Plan 2011-2020 and Aichi Targets” which was financed by the China fund project for ASEAN Member States (AMS) to be used in their efforts towards enhancing the effectiveness of policy making and implementation for biodiversity actions. ³⁴
Guide to the linkages between the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, NBSAPs and the objectives of the framework for nature conservation and protected areas in the Pacific islands region 2014–2020 prepared by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) with UNEP support, showing the alignment/relation between the Aichi targets and the objectives of the Pacific regional environmental program.
<i>National level</i>
Assessment of the current status of implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and action plan for synergetic and coordinated implementation of the Stockholm, Basel and Rotterdam conventions . This was prepared in 2013 by the POPs unit of Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of the Republic of the FYR of Macedonia, with technical support from the UNEP MEA regional focal point and financial support (18000\$) from UNEP.

103. The regional MEA focal points supported several pre-COP and pre-MOP preparatory meetings and related training workshop such as those listed in table III-4. Some are of more strategic value than others, such as regional ministerial forums indicated as expected accomplishment and very helpful to identify regional priorities. The evaluation found no official acknowledgement of regional positions or statement at the end of the meetings and workshop results brought forth in COPs, yet workshop evaluations, MEA secretariat representatives and project reports show that these were well appreciated and resulted in better understanding of issues under negotiations.

Table III-4 Examples of meetings and workshop supported by regional MEA focal points
Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEA) Negotiations Training Workshop to Prepare for the Eleventh Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat (the RAMSAR Convention) held in Addis Ababa, 2-3 March 2012
Eight Francophone country capacity development workshop on indicators and integration of CITES and CMS objectives as part of NBSAP updating, held in June 2013 in Douala, Cameroun
Regional Capacity-building Workshop on Integration of Biodiversity MEAs Objectives into National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) held 26 – 28 November 2012 in Harare, Zimbabwe
Africa Regional Preparatory Meeting for the 11th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) held 21-23 September 2014 in Harare, Zimbabwe
Preparatory meetings for adoption of the Minamata mercury Convention
Workshops to promote the Memorandum of Understanding on Migratory Sharks under the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) West Asia, Dubai February 2014
Preparatory process for Ramsar Convention COP 12, held in June 2015.

³⁴ This output is also planned for and reported on in the China Trust fund.

104. Technical support from regional MEA focal points was mainly solicited by biodiversity MEA secretariats. The significant support role of the UNEP regional focal points for biodiversity-related MEAs was acknowledged in the first expert –meeting on synergies. There were, however, neither systematic evaluations of the knowledge captured nor its use following workshops, nor any self-assessment made during the course of the project. The workshops were nonetheless well appreciated by CBD secretariat who noted advancements namely on quality and timeliness of NBSAPs and national reporting in ASEAN countries following the ASEAN guidance on NBSAPs, namely from Cambodia, Myanmar and Lao. Support to NBSAP revision with financing from the Japan fund is another example of appreciated services to the CBD Secretariat.
105. There were very few requests for services of the regional MEA focal points, from the joint BRS Secretariat. Exchanges between DELC and BRS on “avenues of cooperation on chemicals and waste issues with engagement of the MEA focal points” were not pursued. The BRS expressed some needs (albeit late in the process according to UNEP) involving work on guidance and workshops on DDT, pilot testing of tool kits, identifying areas of concern within the regions, organization of meetings such as COPs, ICCM , INC, technical assistance and follow-up with countries on payment of contributions and resource mobilization. The regional focal point on chemicals for Europe was seconded to the BRS for a few months to help in setting up a science fair. Considered global work, this was considered to be outside the purview of regional MEA focal point support.
106. Services of regional MEA focal points were rarely directly solicited by NFPs and other country representatives. Exceptions are the request for services of the regional focal point for West Asia for technical advice to Gulf countries that are not eligible for GEF funding, such as work with the Palestinian Territories on their first national report on CBD implementation and with Iraq on preparing their first NBSAP. Support to Timor Leste in accession to CITES and to the Philippines are other examples. Also, advisory services were provided for preparation of country reviews and priority-setting were prepared in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar to support revision of NBSAPs and national adaptation and adoption of the Aichi targets.³⁵
107. Regarding regional strategies and action plans the ASEAN and SPREP work on NBSAPs and Aichi targets are the key achievements. In Europe, there was no demand for additional regional action plans. In Latin America there was actually no MEA focal point on biodiversity in post between January 2013 and May 2015.
108. The evaluation did not show any examples of effective country level synergies resulting from, or facilitated by, the project. Regional focal points collected and contributed case examples for the sourcebook prepared in the context of the Biodiversity MEA synergies project. They also shared and discussed these examples in the consultative meetings on the options paper.
109. Regional focal points had essentially no funding to operate. To productively advance their work, they either undertook resource mobilisation actions, looking out for opportunities or supported MEA secretariat work in the region with funds from MEA secretariats. For example, the CBD Secretariat was, exceptionally, the executing agency for a GEF funded project to carry out training workshops on the Nagoya Protocol on ABS and arrangements were made for focal points to facilitate the process essentially as a communication vehicle, to better understand country needs and challenges. Another example of collaboration with CBD Secretariat, are the regional workshops held to develop capacities of countries to revise their NBSAP with financing and technical support of a Japan fund. Help from the MEA focal points with these workshops were well appreciated, as were the China funded NBSAP revision workshops with ASEAN.
110. In brief, the essence of the work of the MEA focal points was to support different UNEP initiatives, meetings and workshops and those initiated by the MEA secretariats. The MEA focal points were clearly productive (for example

³⁵ Part of China fund

there are some 30 reported outputs/activities of the regional focal point for Europe for the year 2014), some were exceptionally resourceful. Missing operational mechanisms, vagueness in TORs, absence of dedicated funding and the undefined challenge of synergies, (see section F) constrained the achievement of project outputs and intended outcomes. Several MEA regional Focal Points succeeded in selection for the positions of regional sub-programme coordinators for ecosystem management and chemicals and waste (6) and other for positions inside of UNEP structures and UNEP implemented projects (2) thank to their knowledge and rich experience on the matters related to thematic field and MEAs. Some good people were lost in the process. All in all, the project was a good idea that was not planned and implemented in an effective manner. Consequently the outcomes and several outputs fell short of the intentions.

LEO project outputs

111. The three major outputs of the LEO project are 1) a renewed [InforMEA Portal](#); providing a one window to access to multiple information sources on Environmental Law and conventions. 2. [The Law and Environment Ontology \(LEO\) portal](#), essentially a thesaurus with harmonization of terminology, their definitions, clarification on convention specific meaning in one source and 3) an e-learning portal [InforMEA E-Learning Tool](#) offering multiple short courses on MEA topics. These outputs dovetail those of an earlier ENRTP project. The initially planned outputs (table III-2) were adjusted to accommodate partner advances and avoid duplication. In particular, the e-learning facility was made a dedicated output to more accurately reflect its relative importance and its position in the context of the initial and evolved ENRTP project. Partners agreed to postpone the Single Window on Trade and MEAs and attribute a bigger share of the original resources to the development and technical infrastructure of the InforMEA Thesaurus component. Instead of dedicated workshops in different regions, part of the resources for the "touching the ground/regional implementation" component were set aside for translation of e-learning courses accessibility and outreach in other capacity building activities and the development of a video library featuring MEA stakeholders.
112. The interoperable information system among MEAs is qualified as unprecedented collaborative effort. The MEA ontology /thesaurus in particular is considered a valuable resource for researchers, students, negotiators, governments, and implementers. Together, they are considered central to knowledge management. The first key stage was to prepare a workable solution for collaborative work, breaking the organizational barrier to link substantive topics. The fact that information can be shared across different sources in a new and meaningful way is described as an extraordinary achievement. A main challenge was to get all different and relevant players to agree, to convince them that the MEA specific information will have added value if it is shared through LEO.
113. We are at the beginning of LEO implementation. More work is needed on tagging data to achieve its full potential. The updated inforMEA and LEO has only just started to reach the national audience. More work on awareness-raising is needed in MEA secretariats, UNEP divisions as well as significant outreach to all potential users. This improved access is expected to lead to change in approach and work habits. This is early times and collecting feedback and improving LEO and its tools based on the feedback has only just begun³⁶. Partners have reported some indications from early adopters that the use of LEO and InforMEA has greatly simplified their lives.
114. While acknowledging the strategic value of the InforMEA concept, some MEA secretariat representatives were less enthusiastic about the LEO project outputs, so far, stating examples of lack of rigour in publishing on the web UNEP eLearning courses that had not been reviewed and vetted by MEA secretariats. They considered ineffective the fact that they had to spend significant time in reviewing content. There were also complaints of loose definitions made public before review and vetting, creating potential confusion in parties and compromising project benefits.

³⁶ The evaluator provided suggestions on a survey to assess the extent the INFORMEA reached the target audience and was appreciated.

115. Partners consider that there are amplified growing pains inherent to the UN system. For example, in the case of names of country focal points not being up to date, changes need to be officially adopted before they are made public. The solutions such as *change in process* now adopted first had to be cleared by legal office. There is also some confusion between the glossary, the thesaurus and the ontology that is currently being clarified.
116. As of mid-March 2016, according to survey results 58% of 106 NFP (of potentially several hundreds) responding were aware of InforMEA for the first time, 22% have known InforMEA for more than 3 years, and the other 20% for 6 months to 3 years. Some 10% use it weekly, 19%, once a month, 30% a few times a year and 41% have never used InforMEA. The secretariat notifications and UN communications are the most frequent means of reaching potential users. The majority (80%) consults COP/MOP decisions and 38% say that InforMEA considerably improved their understanding of MEAs. There is, so far, only a small influence on their work. Users report referring to InforMEA to keep up to date on COP decisions and country's signing up to international conventions, including their own, search for national legislation, respond to technical issues, prepare reports on implementation and fact finding in preparation to communication with partners, compare country commitments. Less than a handful of respondents mention synergies between conventions, or developing national legislation to comply with international conventions.³⁷
117. Many officers of MEA secretariats actively involved in InforMEA/LEO had never themselves used the portal but readily acknowledged that finding all legislation on a topic in one place is extremely helpful. Several IKMEA partners stressed that it was early days to evaluate use and usefulness of the InforMEA portal as LEO implementation has just begun, as so far efforts have been dedicated to getting an operational tool and more work is needed on tagging data as well as on outreach and awareness raising. The survey work collecting feedback and improving the tool based on this feedback is well underway. A specific output on improvements based on user feedback was added in the project revision.
118. In brief, the planned outputs were adjusted to better accommodate partner initiatives. The e-learning portal is well used. The functionalities of the ontology are in place but not yet fully populated for effective use.

Biodiversity MEA synergies project outputs

119. A first key output of the project is the paper *Elaboration of options for enhancing synergies among biodiversity-related conventions* –the so called Options paper. The document captures the results of two international expert meetings, held in 2014 and 2015 setting out possible ways for enhancing cooperation in implementing biodiversity-related conventions, with actions identified for various actors. Although focusing on the global level, the paper also includes options addressing Parties to the biodiversity-related conventions and governments in general.
120. The focus of the options paper is on programmatic cooperation for which National Biodiversity Strategies and Action plans (NBSAPs), the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets provide the foundation. Elements of possible synergy actions are broadly outlined on reporting, monitoring and indicators, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and strengthening the science policy interface, information management and awareness, capacity –building, funding and resource efficiency and institutional collaboration. The preparation of the option paper began with online surveys, sent by UNEP to national focal points, authorities and convention secretariats in early 2014. This helped to inform the elements of an initial draft document, discussed at a first expert meeting in August 2014. Based on the inputs received during this meeting, a first draft of the paper was completed in late 2014, and subsequently sent out for review to key stakeholders, including the convention secretariats. Following the review period, a revised version was finalized, providing input to a second expert meeting in May 2015, which further refined and elaborated the option.
121. Through seven linked thematic areas, the paper provides 28 options, under which 88 actions have been identified for various actors, including Governments, convention secretariats, UNEP and other relevant United Nations bodies. These options and actions take into account relevant completed, existing and planned initiatives

³⁷ Survey monkey results of March 2016 excluding academics. Please describe how you use the above selected information in the context of your work.

undertaken by a number of actors, namely convention secretariats, governments and non-government organisations.

122. The second major product of the Biodiversity MEA synergy project is the *Sourcebook of Opportunities for Enhancing Cooperation among the Biodiversity related Conventions at National and Regional level*.³⁸ This sourcebook is the result of identification, analysis and sharing of case examples of collaboration and coordination among the national focal points of the different MEA and overall good practices. Put together by UNEP WCMC, the purpose of the sourcebook is to provide National Focal Points (NFPs) and other stakeholders working on biodiversity conventions referenced guidance elements for enhanced cooperation to strengthen implementation. Preparation of the Sourcebook involved a survey of potential users, workshops in the margins of WGRI (Montreal workshop) CBD COP 12 and CMS COP 11. The Sourcebook was launched at Ramsar Convention COP12 in June 2015 with some outreach and follow up. It provides an overview of the possibilities for enhancing the coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions within the same five thematic areas of the option paper. These comprise National Reporting and Information Management; Science-Policy Interface; Capacity Building; The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and NBSAPs and; Financial resource mobilisation and use, and through institutional collaborative arrangements. The sourcebook provides guidance to country actors highlighting case studies of cooperation among national focal points and agencies responsible for implementing the conventions. Examples are the Mexican CONABIO permanent commission that acts as a bridge between NFP for CITES and CBD, the WHC and CITES joint monitoring of elephant poaching (MIKE) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) charged with the protection and sustainable development of the region's environment and regrouping American Samoa, Australia, Pacific Island Countries, USA, and the UK. Few examples are given of institutional initiatives where biodiversity community works jointly with organisations outside the biodiversity circles such as CITES work with the international timber organization.

123. The project outputs served as basis for discussion with and among biodiversity MEAs and other government and non-government actors. In particular they were key discussion documents in a CBD led workshop held in Geneva in February 2016. CBD decision X II/6 (Oct 2014) established an informal advisory group whose mandate was to prepare a workshop that would prepare options, which could include elements for a possible road map, for Parties of the biodiversity-related conventions to enhance synergies and improve efficiency among them. The documents used as a basis for this workshop included both the options paper and the sourcebook, and was supplemented by a survey of capacity building needs at country level. CBD Decision XII/6 had invited the Executive Director of UNEP to share the results of the biodiversity MEA synergy project to the COPs of each biodiversity related conventions. There were preparatory webinars to the Geneva workshop outlining the content of respectively the options paper and the sourcebook, shared with meeting participants and afterwards made available to various groups via the NBSAP forum and other biodiversity MEA web sites, as well as an e-module outlining the conclusions of both the Options paper and the Sourcebook. Another example of use is the South-South exchange workshop³⁹ organized by UNEP in Nairobi for the benefit of 16 countries currently reviewing their NBSAP.

124. The most significant and potentially far reaching use of the two major project outputs was the path to the UNEA and its future use in discussion of governing bodies of biodiversity-related conventions and other relevant organizations. The UNEA-2 resolution welcomed the results of the project, in particular the options paper, and the workshop on synergies hosted by the CBD and requested the Executive Director of UNEP to transmit to the conferences of parties to the biodiversity –related conventions, the results of the project. The UNEA resolution also invites the governing bodies of biodiversity-related conventions to further strengthen their cooperation and enhance synergies among them and to consider the results of the project and explore opportunities for further synergies.

³⁸ <https://nationalmeasynergies.wordpress.com/the-sourcebook/>

³⁹ South-South cooperation workshop on NBSAPs and Synergies, ACP MEA project. Nairobi 15-17 of March 2016.

125. The report of the Executive Director of UNEP to the UNEA highlighted progress on actions taken to enhance synergies among the biodiversity –related multilateral agreements, focusing on options for actions by UNEP, activities of UNEP in support of enhancing cooperation among biodiversity-related MEAs and concluding with a recommendation to UNEA that it request Member States to create an enabling environment for promoting actions to enhance synergies at global, regional and national level, suggest that forthcoming discussions and decisions of governing bodies of MEAs, GEF Assembly and other processes support actions to enhance synergies, so that the elements identified in the options paper can be translated into actions on the ground and request that UNEP and the MEA secretariats work towards enhancing actions for implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, including indicators and periodic review of progress.⁴⁰
126. In preparation to UNEA, outcomes of the meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) to UNEP had requested the Executive Director to promote the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and NBSAPs and to integrate supporting actions into the UNEP programme of work. This included providing interlinkages between data, information, knowledge and tools in order to allow for synergies, UNEP regional office support and linking to work of UNCT on UNDAFs.

C. EFFECTIVENESS: ATTAINMENT OF PROJECTS OBJECTIVES AND RESULTS

127. The evaluation of effectiveness considers both the extent the projects attained the direct outcomes (as per the reconstructed TOC based on project logical frameworks) and the likelihood of impact beyond the outcomes, advancing coherence in synergies in the implementation of the MEAs and their intended purposes. This assessment is mainly based on evidence of project advances in putting in place the drivers of advancements towards the project objectives. Overall, there is weak evidence of project results beyond the outputs described in section III-B.
128. The strongest evidence of impacts of the three projects in terms of how they are likely to foster change and collaboration in implementation of MEAs is the potentially far-reaching UNEA resolutions regarding synergies. Coherence and synergies in the UN system and multilateral environmental agreements is somewhat of an elusive goal and clearly a shared responsibility beyond UNEP's institutional capacities. There are encouraging developments improving the overall context situation, namely the adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda with SDGs that incorporate MEAs and the related UN organizational changes. Time will tell the extent the project work and subsequent UNEA resolutions contributed to shaping a renewed collaborative system of environmental governance. There is little evidence that any of the three projects contributed to those encouraging on-going changes.
129. The extent each of the projects contribute to reverse of the negative trends on biodiversity conservation and reduce the negative environmental impacts of chemicals is also faint. The projects have focused on addressing indirect measures of mainly global governance issues that are a small piece of the puzzle to reverse negative environmental trends.

Regional MEA Focal Points Project effectiveness

Achievement of direct outcomes

130. The intended outcomes of the Regional MEA focal point are that 1) MEA parties, focal points and other key stakeholders have increased understanding of negotiated MEA issues and adopt best practices for implementation and 2) Strengthened national and regional implementation of chemical and biodiversity related MEAs. (section II-2 I)
131. There is weak evidence that the meetings and workshops supported by increased understanding among convention parties of issues under negotiation at MEA COPs. Workshops carried out in least developed countries of

⁴⁰ United Nations Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme. Enhancing synergies among the biodiversity –related multilateral environmental agreements. Report of the Executive Director – UNEP EA.2/12

Africa with an assumed lower baseline of understanding are more likely to contribute to these otherwise vague intended outcomes. There were few workshop evaluations, and follow ups after the meetings.

132. There is expression of support for UNEP regional presence, yet no mentions of UNEP advisory contribution in the MEA COP/MOPs decisions, and the sense is that the large majority of these decisions would have gone ahead regardless of preparatory workshops. The exceptions are the preparatory meetings to the Minamata Convention, and preparatory work support of CMS engaging with countries on contentious issues such as conservation status of migratory sharks where there is evidence of a planned process of exchanges and results.
133. Similarly, there are few examples of increased adoption among convention parties of better practices in MEA implementation that were identified by UNEP. Advances in NBSAP preparation were significant during the period, and regional biodiversity focal points were helpful in supporting NBSAP reviews and country level adaptation of Aichi targets. However these are established practices that were not newly identified by UNEP. There is no evidence of strengthened implementation of chemicals-related MEAs at the regional and national levels as a result of the regional MEA focal point project.
134. There is an inherent and obstinate incentive to holding training workshops and meetings as a solution to advancing implementation. The value of meetings and workshops hinges on the ability to share specific action-oriented analysis and ensure tailored follow up. One way to improve the situation is to have specific agreed upon objectives and workshop evaluations with explicit questions related to the capture of knowledge and its intended use. There is little evidence of this strategic planning in the many workshops supported by the project. This lack of adequate need assessment and planning of the many workshops supported by the project undermined the achievement of the intended project outcomes.

Likelihood of impacts

135. Positive long term impacts resulting from the MEA Regional Focal Points Project are unlikely. The implicit assumption that countries are committed to incorporate MEA obligations appears to oversimplify the complexities and obstacles to effective MEA implementation and the likelihood of related positive impacts on conservation and sustainable use biodiversity and reduction of chemical waste and risks. Much more is needed, namely adequate situational analysis and setting in place adequate drivers of change, discussed below.
136. The competencies, knowledge and helpful attitude of regional MEA Focal Points was recognized by all MEA involved in working with them, indicating good human resource selection by UNEP, but less effectiveness in managing this talent pool effectively. Overall, UNEP support of regional MEA focal points does not appear strong, beyond basic hiring. The supportive role of the UNEP regional focal points for biodiversity-related MEAs was acknowledged in the first expert meeting on synergies under the Biodiversity MEA focal point project. The focal points rehired in other UNEP positions are enhancing UNEP human resource assets with limited capacities to directly contribute to advancing synergies in implementation of biodiversity and/or chemical related MEAs.
137. The work of biodiversity MEA focal points in supporting the synergistic implementation of biodiversity MEAs is outlined in the sourcebook. The sourcebook mentions pilot projects and capacity building workshops in the context of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and Aichi targets, facilitating information exchange and networking, facilitating pre and post COP regional consultations, developing and implementing GEF projects supporting implementation of Biodiversity related MEAs, recruitment of new parties and ensuring that biodiversity related issues are reflected in regional ministerial forums such as African Ministerial conference on the Environment (AMCEN) as well as contributing to UNDAF and Delivering as One processes.⁴¹
138. The project was expected to strengthen UNEP regional presence. This is in a context where UNEP regional actions are continuously being strengthened. The recent operational guidance note on strengthening UNEP regional presence and contribution to the *Future we want* confirms this movement. The note clarifies the regional

⁴¹ Sourcebook box 7.

responsibilities at both policy and operational level and includes further national support to MEA-related issues.⁴² There is little evidence that the regional MEA focal point project contributed to this strengthening. Conversely, the focal points in post would have likely delivered more effective support had they been integrated in a structured regional support system.

139. National focal point engagement in country level implementation is reputed to be unequal. While COP decisions have encouraged cooperation, collaboration and synergies in the implementation, there is scant evidence of effective national focal point engagement in the advances towards the project outcome. UNEA resolutions inviting governing bodies of MEAs may, perhaps, be the missing trigger. National focal points participated in organized workshops, a few sought advice from regional MEA focal points, but there is no evidence that they were otherwise well engaged in the MEA regional focal point project.
140. In terms of regional institution's promotion and support of MEA implementations, those regional partners specifically solicited such as ANSEA, SREP, and other regional groups were effective within their capacities. These regional institutions are well established and critical drivers to the advances on the biodiversity agenda in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
141. In brief, there is little progress on the overall goal of improving coherence and synergies *that can be attributed to the project*. The evidence of improved practice in MEA implementation at country level is essentially support to NBSAP revisions, supported by CBD initiated workshops and ASEAN, supported financially by the China Trust Fund.
142. In the case of the joint Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm conventions (BRS) the significant administrative reform has not yet resulted in effective synergy at national level. Reporting remains separate, as there are MEA specific obligations such as import and export of waste. The project did not contribute to further progress as there were few joint/collaborative arrangements, programming or activities between joint BRS Secretariats and UNEP.

LEO project effectiveness

Achievement of direct outcomes

143. The intended LEO project outcome is that countries and stakeholders have improved access to and are increasingly using information on environmental law and conventions obtained through LEO (and InforMEA)
144. The project has improved access to information on Environmental law and conventions by countries and stakeholders in a promising manner. The increased access to and use of InforMEA and LEO has just begun. The coordination unit and partners have so far not reached-out enough to country users and internal audiences such as MEA secretariat staff. Some key secretariat staff have never used InforMEA. Essentially, all partners interviewed stressed that it was too early to assess the effectiveness of the Ontology. The new web tools put in place with the LEO project offer promising possibilities. The functionality is now in place and is considered extremely powerful, but much more work is needed by MEAs to complete the tagging and realise the full potential of the tool.
145. According to some partners, there are some indications from early adopters that the use of LEO and InforMEA has greatly simplified their lives, for example COP negotiators in the joint meeting of 2013, and were able to check what language had already been used by others in completing the text for a proposed COP decision. Key partners consider that they are starting to see some impact in MEA parties, when they look at the data through a one-stop Portal across MEAs they get a much more comprehensive overview of the MEA situation in their country and elsewhere.
146. Partners working collaboratively on an equal level, with no competition, no hierarchy and offering a knowledge product that is beyond the sum contribution of each partner is a significant example of cooperation among MEAs to increase coherence and synergies. The benefit to collaborating partners is noteworthy: helping to organize their information content, opening the door to effective knowledge management, exchanging of experiences, removing

⁴² UNEP Operational Guidance Note .Strengthened UNEP Strategic Regional Presence. Version 18 May 2016

duplicative efforts by reusing the tools that have been developed by other partners are among the benefits acknowledged by partners. Also noted is that the LEO improvements contribute to break the silos of the MEAs and UNEP structure. By collaborating across different subjects and mandates, the renewed web tools can help parties to be more coherent when they negotiate and make new decisions.

Likelihood of impacts

147. Effective increase in country capacity to develop and enforce laws and strengthen institutions to achieve internationally agreed environmental goals requires- information access to existing legislation, expertise, best practices, and available technologies and methodologies. InforMEA and LEO are helping convention implementation to be more coherent and hence respond to the overall objective of improving coherence and synergies by facilitating the comparison of data and information from different MEAs. This is a base starting point. Information access is necessary but not sufficient for country capacity. InforMEA partners commented on the need for corresponding training, education, exchange of experiences through north-south and south-south cooperation. Cooperation helps in adapting legislation, best practices technologies and methodologies to local conditions of climate, habitat, biodiversity, cultural, social and developmental identities of countries and communities. LEO is considered an enabler activity to achieve new objectives that were not possible in isolation. Also the project is a good complement to other UNEP projects focusing on reinforcing environmental laws and conventions.

148. The joint BRS Secretariat, a key InforMEA partner emphasizes that their core mandate is to share information, as is the case for all MEAs mandates. For example BRS article 9 of Stockholm gives mandate to build a Clearing House Mechanism (CHM) on POPs, also the Rotterdam convention on prior and informed consent is data/information based. The critical point for effectiveness was not only that MEA partners contributed data, information and knowledge, but also that the project contributed to help partners carry out their mandate of information sharing. There is a built-in example of synergies as peer exchange among knowledge manager of MEAs is helpful to align with others and for building respective capacities.

149. There is good likelihood of positive impacts resulting from the projects as the key drivers are in place for the project to achieve its full effectiveness. The MEA IKM partners contribute up-to-date contents, the full relevance of this content will be determined with more in-depth client feedback recently initiated. The outreach to stakeholders with targeted information on renewed portal features and how it can support their work has only just begun. Initial responses suggest that portal features are relatively easy to use. The strong engagement of MEA partners ensures there is up-to-date infrastructure and maintenance and overall good likelihood of positive impacts beyond the achieved results.

BRS has a mandate to build a clearing house mechanism of its own. LEO has served as a proof of concept for some components of our clearing house mechanism that are currently under development. The reverse is also true: LEO has benefitted from some of the work done in the BRS clearing house mechanism

Biodiversity MEA synergies project effectiveness

Achievement of direct outcomes

150. The first Intended outcome of the Biodiversity MEA synergies project was that MEA parties acknowledge biodiversity MEA implementation issues and adopt means of cooperation and collaboration. This involves enhanced institutional arrangements, operations and services in order to bring about more effective and efficient implementation of MEAs. There is not yet clear evidence that this has happened but a promising engagement in the UNEA resolution referring to measures identified and shared in the option paper resulting from the project.⁴³

⁴³ UNEA-2. Enhancing the work of the United Nations Environment Programme in facilitating cooperation, collaboration and synergies among biodiversity-related conventions. UNEP/EA.2/L.19/Rev.1

151. The options outlined in the *Option paper* aim to achieve implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions in an increasingly coherent manner, involving greater collaboration and cooperation among convention parties, convention secretariats and key partners, leading to increased efficiency and effectiveness in achieving the aims of those conventions; as well as increased collaboration and cooperation in the implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions at all levels, facilitated engagement with other sectors, and improved opportunities for mainstreaming biodiversity objectives into other policies and sectors (including through the United Nations development assistance frameworks and in furtherance of the Sustainable Development Goals).⁴⁴

152. The second intended project outcome was to strengthen institutional arrangements of coordination and cooperation in country and regional implementation of MEAs. A key country level vehicle for this to happen is that countries prepare and adopt revised NBSAPs integrating Aichi targets with UNEP support. – There is an attribution issue as the majority of support to NBSAP is through CBD or GEF initiated projects. While NBSAPs have been prepared by a majority of countries as required by Aichi targets and related COP decisions, only a few countries have made NBSAPs national policy and led to institutional and on the ground changes.⁴⁵

153. In brief, the intended project outcomes have not so far been fully achieved. The UNEA resolution is evidence of significant achievement towards the intended outcome.

Likelihood of impacts

154. The likelihood of impacts is also increased considering the UNEA resolution and advances on the key drivers. In terms of MEA secretariat engagement in collaborative actions with UNEP to support national level implementation, the resolutions adopted at the UNEA offer good promise, namely on mutually supporting programming. Otherwise, from the evaluation interviews there were more signs of tensions between UNEP and MEAs than of collaborative actions. MEA representative have repeated that collaboration *among MEAs* is significantly increased and often perceive UNEP efforts to strengthen implementation of MEAs as trying to take over their agendas.

155. There is so far little evidence that convention parties, MEA secretariats and national MEA focal points have engaged in increased collaborative arrangements that have strengthened coherence and synergy in implementation of Biodiversity MEAs. The project has set the scene for multiplying collaborative programming between MEA secretariats and UNEP by supporting the UNEA resolutions regarding enhanced synergies and mainstreaming⁴⁶. There is good evidence of collaboration between UNEP and CBD with the latter using the results of the project in the CBD forum. Why this workshop could not be a joint UNEP and CBD initiative remains an open question⁴⁷.

156. Some MEA secretariats strongly doubted the effectiveness of the project outputs, do not believe countries will read the over 200 page sourcebook and act upon it. The sense is that in terms of facilitating effective synergies, the

⁴⁴ As described in information documents on Workshop on synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions. Geneva, Switzerland, 8-11 February 2016 , and the UNEA 2 Report of the executive director of UNEP (UNEP/EA.2/12)

⁴⁵ IISD 2016. Online brief. Status of development of national biodiversity strategies and action plans or equivalent instruments (NBSAPs)

⁴⁶ Mainstreaming biodiversity for well-being UNEP/EA.2/L.18/Rev1.

UNEA-2. Enhancing the work of the United Nations Environment Programme in facilitating cooperation, collaboration and synergies among biodiversity-related conventions. UNEP/EA.2/L.19/Rev.1

⁴⁷ According to the Secretariat of CBD, the formulation of the CBD COP decision XII/6 depicts that the workshop to be prepared by an informal advisory group (of Party-representatives, in consultation with the Secretariat); that it be facilitated by the CBD Secretariat; that the principal participants be representatives of Parties to the conventions; and that UNEP be invited as an observer.

established Biodiversity Liaison Group (BLG), the strategic plan for biodiversity and Aichi targets and the NBSAPs are the vehicle to reinforce and the UNEP project did not add to those advances. Many see the way forward for the biodiversity synergies is in working with institutions and groups outside the biodiversity circles.

157. The extent the project products and related discussions recognize the specificities of the conventions is questioned. For example joint reporting is not necessarily the 'low hanging fruit' collaborative action urged by many. Conventions have specific reporting requirements, at times written into their Convention text, for example, CITES has two reporting requirements: i) a trade report every year and ii) an implementation report between meetings of the CoP (which occur every three years).
158. MEA secretariats underlined that it is the Parties which adopt the reporting frameworks in the COPs. Therefore it has to be through Parties and COP decisions and in a party-driven rather than top down initiatives that harmonization can be achieved⁴⁸. This party-driven requisite was a major conclusion of the 2012 WCMC paper on synergies.
159. The adoption of the UNEA resolutions on synergies among biodiversity related MEAs is strong evidence that the option paper, sourcebook and NBSAP forum (or other knowledge generated and captured by the project) will reach the target audience. The synergy messages and examples that can lead to changes in national policy or institutional practice in implementation of MEAs hold promise, but are not yet demonstrated.
160. The improved effectiveness and cooperation in national implementation of the Biodiversity MEAs is driven by the effective engagement of National focal points of the different biodiversity conventions in identifying the solutions and in taking action on the synergy areas documented in the sourcebook, working collaboratively with their in-country peers as well as engaging stakeholders of other development sectors. They have so far been engaged in outlining what they are already doing and participation suggests good interest and acknowledgements of benefits. The UNEA resolutions together with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are promising triggers to further change. The positive decisions in UNEA are evidence that the project has been successful in raising-awareness of possibilities.
161. UNEP effectively communicated potential solutions, informing decision processes of UNEA and COPS. This has been a key driver in global decision circles (UNEA and governing bodies of MEAs). Countries' political will to enhance synergies for improved implementation of MEAs is reconfirmed in their positive decisions at UNEA.
162. The explicit assumption that increased awareness of potential for synergies on resource mobilisation and strengthening capacities leads to actions remains a fair assumption and, conversely, lack of financial resources is an obstacle to cooperation among national focal points.
163. Support to NBSAP is clearly established across the biodiversity MEAs. NBSAP review processes increase engagement of stakeholders from a diversity of sectors but there is little evidence that this has so far happened as a result the project. The UNEA decisions reaffirming the critical importance of NBSAPs and encouraging their integration in UNDAF processes is a major step forward.
164. In brief, the implicit drivers of change have all advanced in the context of the project contributing to progress on the objectives and results. National biodiversity focal points participated in identifying means for improving cooperation in implementation of biodiversity MEAs. MEA secretariats and national biodiversity focal points have confirmed their continual engagement to cooperation in MEA implementation, in particular on NBSAPs as vehicle for national policy direction and synergies. UNEP effectively communicated potential solutions in UNEA and there is, from the discussions and documented decisions, strong signs of positive influence of UNEP work on the UNEA members and related processes, namely CBD and other MEA COPs. In that manner, UNEP was successful in mobilizing technical knowledge and leadership skills to promote adoption of synergy practices in MEA implementation. To what extent this has led to effective on the ground change depends on follow-up decisions of

⁴⁸ Interlaken report

the different governing bodies of the biodiversity MEAs as well as their effective influence in country level governance.

D.SUSTAINABILITY AND REPLICATION

165. The factors likely to undermine or contribute to the sustainability and replication of project benefits encompass financial and socio-political sustainability, institutional frameworks introduced or reinforced, resulting contribution to environmental sustainability as well as the catalytic role and incentive to replication. What lasting influence can be expected from project processes and products? What lasting behavioural change in targeted stakeholders? What incentives for policy change or other persistent change have been set in motion by the projects?
166. The financial sustainability of the projects is directly linked to ENRTP and UNEP core budget financing. The regional MEA focal point project financing was dropped, replaced by funding of regional sub-programmes coordinators supporting thematic areas of biodiversity and ecosystems or chemical and waste including related MEAs. The LEO project has obtained approval for EC funding of next phase from July 2016 and partner engagement ensures its continuation. The next phase of the Biodiversity MEA synergies project actions is in good position to obtain funding (from EC and others) given the UNEA-2 resolutions on UNEP priority areas of work.
167. All three projects aimed to lead to sustained changes in country level implementation of MEAs, yet there is weak evidence of changes to Institutional frameworks and governance that were triggered by the projects. UNEP regional presence and supporting countries is in a steady trend of strengthening before, during and after the projects. This is re-affirmed in the UNEP operational guidance note *“Strengthened UNEP Strategic Presence: Contributing to The Future We Want”*⁴⁹. The projects alone were not successful in addressing these huge challenges. The only vehicle for country level institutional change appears to be the NBSAPs, promoted and supported by the biodiversity MEA synergy project and the MEA regional focal points. However, the extent the MEA focal point project, and the other two projects contributed to reinforce this movement is considered marginal, because of the operational ambiguity and resulting weakness of the regional support provided by the MEA focal point project.
168. Socio-political sustainability of the project intended outcomes is assured in the sense that UNEP regional presence, the use of information on international law and conventions in an integrated manner and enhancing synergies in the implementation of MEAs are all irreversible trends.
169. The increase in synergy in implementation of biodiversity-related MEAs at global, regional and country level has been anchored by the UNEA-2 resolution inviting the governing bodies of biodiversity-related conventions, other relevant United Nations bodies and Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) to further strengthen their cooperation and enhance synergies among them, considering the results of the biodiversity MEA synergy project. The latter is considered to have had catalytic role in encouraging replication. The sustained changes to institutional frameworks are expected to come in the future, but there is no evidence that they have so far materialized. NBSAP are supported by UNEP and MEAs as an effective instrument for policy change and NBSAP revisions are promising. However, there is so far little evidence of integration in national development systems. Also, the project contribution to NBSAP revisions and implementation was marginal compared to the on-going NBSAP support by CBD and GEF supported initiatives.
170. What else is required to ensure the cooperation measures identified in the option paper and sourcebook are adopted and institutionalized? The approach to sustaining project outcomes and benefits appears to have been so far largely based on inviting organizational changes in global forums. To be able to tackle effectively the MEA challenges there is a need for change in country level institutional frameworks, governance structures, processes of sub regional agreements and legal and accountability frameworks at all levels. That party based governance shift maybe forthcoming, but is not yet here and there is little evidence that the three projects have helped to set this change in motion.

⁴⁹ UNEP Operational Guidance Note .Strengthened UNEP Strategic Regional Presence. Version 18 May 2016

Sustainability of the Regional MEA focal point project results

171. The decentralized provision of UNEP technical advisory support, in collaboration with relevant MEA Secretariats is an effective way to improve UNEP's programme and projects delivery at regional and national level. Overall, the UNEP strategy has strengthened its presence in the regions, and it had opened the door to UNEP regional support to MEAs. MEA focal points and MEA secretariats unanimously acknowledged the value of UNEP regional technical advisory support.
172. There were operational weaknesses that undermined the project's effectiveness and sustainability. The support involved at most, one person on biodiversity MEAs and one on chemicals and no available budget, which is insufficient. There was ambiguity on whether or not this support was led by the UNEP regional office -key operational drivers of UNEP regional presence, by secretariats, by DELC division, or by country -client demand.
173. Financing the posts with regular rather than extra budgetary funds without possibilities of funding initiatives with countries is associated with a perception of permanency in regular posts which affects effectiveness and sustainability. MEA secretariats have all outlined the advantage and benefit of MEA focal points' knowledge of local issues, perceptions and needs. The level of trust between the regional focal points, country and regional counterparts requires an investment of time and effort that counterparts are not always willing to make when the resource person is perceived to be temporarily in post. A stable situation ensuring some continuity is needed to build trust and effectively serve as reference person in a region.
174. Although there are new postings for regional coordinators, the functions are broader. The biodiversity MEA secretariats consider that the project is regrettably over and they will find other means to work in regions. Regional biodiversity focal point scope of work is not the same as secretariats consider the MEA specific function critical.
175. Regarding the regional coordinators for chemicals and waste, the MEAs remain unclear on how it will work and all fit together. UNEP's Chemicals Branch, on the other hand, see this change as a way to make the system much more effective, with not only eyes and ears but with also hands.
176. In brief, the regional MEA focal point project posed issues of delivery, financing, ineffective management of demand for services and weak stakeholder engagement which undermined its sustainability. This is particularly disappointing in a context where regional support has been experienced by several United Nations regional offices who have valuable experiences to share and the pilot to the project itself which began in 2009.

Sustainability of the LEO project results

177. The sustainability of the LEO project is grounded on three main factors. The interoperability of the system ensuring individual MEA ownership and benefit, and enabling synergies, open source technology providing added value information and knowledge from the collective and continuous technical contribution of established institutional partners. The benefit to MEA secretariat partners is an incentive that ensures sustainability beyond the ENRTP financing. The relation of InforMEA with ECOLex and FAOLex also adds to sustainability value as it offers information means that can help with integration of MEAs in national policies.
178. Effectively using information for interactions, links and synergies among MEAs is also an irreversible trend. The InforMEA project has clearly set the scene with the interoperability functions. The stakeholders reach and use of the InforMEA portal and information needs to become an established practice to ensure sustainability with strong institutional frameworks. There is a recognized lead role of InforMEA in expressing the vision, making it a reality and demonstrating the feasibility and benefit of interoperability of data and information.
179. Stakeholders use of InforMEA is critical and in initial growth stages. Promotion underway by UNEP partners and various UNEP initiatives will no doubt help to further the increase in use. The outreach strategies utilized in the projects have not been in place for sufficient time to reach full target audience, ensure knowledge uptake and influence decisions of the relevant stakeholders. Initial survey results show limited early evidence that access to MEA information is having a marking on political decision-making at national and regional levels. This is likely to increase with effective outreach.

Now that we have this powerful tool like LEO we need to capitalize on it by working with other colleagues in raising its awareness, its use for capacity building and training- IKM partner

Sustainability of the Biodiversity MEA synergies project results

180. Stakeholder discussions in preparation to UNEA-2 and the resolutions adopted regarding the enhancement of the work of the UNEP in facilitating the cooperation, collaboration and synergies among biodiversity-related conventions are strong evidence of sustainability of the project results.⁵⁰
181. The emphasis of the UNEA resolution on mutually reinforcing programmes of work of UNEP and the respective conferences of the parties is a promising avenue of sustainable institutional collaborative arrangements. UNEP facilitation of collaboration among biodiversity –related conventions to contribute to follow-up and review process of biodiversity goals and targets of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda is another promising conduit.
182. The UNEA-2 resolution inviting the governing bodies of biodiversity-related conventions, other relevant United Nations bodies and Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services IPBES to further strengthen their cooperation and enhance synergies among them, considering that the results of the biodiversity MEA synergy project anchors the sustainability of biodiversity MEA synergies. The project is considered to have had catalytic role in encouraging replication, although clearly instances such as the EMG, the biodiversity liaison Group have had marked influence. The sustained changes to institutional frameworks are expected to come in the future. The UNEA resolutions are evidence on the potential impact of the project’s processes and products on political decision-making at national and regional levels to strengthen biodiversity MEAs synergy.
183. Sharing good practice favours emulation. However, there is so far little evidence that the sourcebook is being used for strengthening institutional arrangements of coordination and cooperation in country and regional implementation of MEAs although it should be noted that the sourcebook was completed and published just over one year ago. The strategies utilized in the project were not fully sufficient to reach country audiences, other than marginally in some workshops and with web postings. The UNEA decision is likely to be more effective in helping to promote knowledge uptake and influence decisions of the relevant stakeholders.

E.EFFICIENCY

184. Efficiency is essentially the cost-effectiveness of the projects, partner delivery and financial management and the extent the projects made use of and build upon existing institutional agreements and other projects.

Regional MEA focal point project

185. The MEA secretariats consider the project was little cost for high return on support to MEAs. This is in a context where there was an issue of lack of funds available to MEA focal points activities, and the problem of some funds being made available with too short notice to be spent effectively.
186. Because the outputs were defined so broadly, effective tracking of results was difficult and opened the door to reports of numerous activities and non-verifiable achievements. There is also no evidence that there was an effective management adjustment to the shortcomings. The resourceful MEA focal points found ways to carry out useful activities. The project expenditures were significantly different than planned for several budget items. For example the subcontracts budget shows a planned budget of 168 000\$ and expenditure of 747 850\$, exceeding the planned budget by 579 850\$. Group training budget was 410 000\$ and expenditures totalled only 62, 646\$ (Annex 3 table A3-1). There were no details provided on the reason for these differences, nor any recorded in project revision. This questions the efficiency of spending of the project budget which all in all represents over 5 million dollars. Expenditures of several budget items are significantly different than what was initially planned.

⁵⁰ UNEA-2. Enhancing the work of the United Nations Environment Programme in facilitating cooperation, collaboration and synergies among biodiversity-related conventions. UNEP/EA.2/L.19/Rev.1

LEO project

187. The LEO project benefited from a well-structured budget by verifiable outputs. The cost is considered reasonable in producing far-reaching tools. Initially deemed significant by project partners, the cost is expected to be low once the ontology is complete. None of the partners questioned the efficiency of the project. Cost-effectiveness of producing outputs is very good due to effective management and significant partner contributions totalling 925 725\$.
188. The base work was carried out by three partner organisations: the Legal response Initiative, IUCNs Academy of environmental law and IUCNs Nature environmental law Center. A third partner IISD was mandated with outreach activities. Well detailed service agreements with partners outlined the specific outputs, responsibilities, costs and payment details.
189. Expenditure of planned budget was only partly achieved because of administrative delays and unforeseen complexities of the thesaurus. Amendments were made to adjust to project advancement and needs, namely reallocating funds (75 000\$ initially planned for touching the ground activities and the single window of trade) to the more challenging outputs of the thesaurus and production of audio-visual material.⁵¹ Outreach activities were postponed which is understandable and an adequate response given some of the functionalities and information base were not fully completed. These arrangements and adjustments are considered evidence of efficient operation and management.
190. In terms of synergies with the other two projects under review, the LEO project manager made presentations and contributed to discussions on biodiversity MEA synergies workshop discussions. There is no evidence of MEA focal points participating and contributing to the LEO project, although ideas on promotion were exchanged.
191. There is collaboration and complementarity with other UNEP projects, such as the UNEP Live as well as discussions on nomenclature, (for example on the meaning of ontology) to ensure coherence with other UNEP initiatives.

Biodiversity MEA synergies project

192. There was no tracked expenditure by output, making an assessment of cost effectiveness by output unworkable at this stage. There is no clear correspondence of expenditures with the four major outputs planned at design stage as they were broken down in slightly different products than those initially planned. The contract cost of 526 340 \$ essentially cost of WCMC services can broadly be approximated to the cost of production of the sourcebook.
193. Biodiversity project was considered by some MEA secretariats as high cost in terms of money spent on meetings and the staff time required to review and correct text- and minimal return added value. While there is recognized value in documenting and sharing country experiences, the feeling was that this could have been done much more efficiently at a lower cost by hiring consultants to collate the experiences rather than hold expensive meetings. The Sourcebook took longer than planned to produce given the extensive consultations.
194. The project took advantage of work carried out by the regional focal points and LEO projects, referring to information generated by InforMEA and partnering with biodiversity MEA focal points to share information. The regional biodiversity MEA focal points actively contributed case examples to the sourcebook.

C. FACTORS AFFECTING PERFORMANCE

195. Quality of project design, preparation and readiness, implementation and management, stakeholder consultation and or participation, public awareness, country ownership, financial planning and management, UNEP project review, supervision and backstopping, and projects monitoring and evaluation were considered; as well as the possible influences of ENRTP SCA.

⁵¹ LEO project revision document -April 2016

196. What problematic situation did each project intend to change? What were the preconditions for this change to happen? Who needed to be engaged? The theory of change causal pathways was not specifically constructed in any of the three project designs.
197. There was insufficient monitoring and evaluation in the MEA regional focal point and Biodiversity MEA synergies project. ENRTP with quarterly traffic light system identified unspent funds otherwise, there was little space for feedback on project performance and for adjusting actions accordingly.

Regional MEA focal point project

198. The main factors negatively affecting the performance were the weakness of initial project design and in financial planning and management. While the regional focal points no doubt accomplished many things, the lack of finance was a major factor affecting performance. The fact that the actions undertaken for support to MEA secretariats was mostly ad hoc rather than part of a well-articulated strategy and program appropriate for the region, was also a major hindrance to project performance.

Preparation and readiness

199. The design of the MEA focal points project was initially very loose with vague output and outcome definitions and weak involvement of MEAs to refine needs and targets. The project was designed prior to UNEP requirements for TOC in project planning and design. The 2012 context was a complex situation of alert on MEA implementation gaps, with multiple dimensions and broad stroke recognition of issues and analysis to resolve. In this context, even if not fully worked out, any effort to better identify what is needed as concrete change to transform the system would have been considered a good step forward. Significant involvement of MEA secretariats would have been beneficial, and it appears from interviews that there was in fact little involvement of MEA secretariats in project design. Evaluation interviews suggest that the ENRTP process may have pushed for quick project documents that had to be prepared in rush overnight mode without adequate time for consultation and planning.
200. The UNEP Project Review Committee (PRC) had, at the onset, addressed the weaknesses in the intended outcomes, indicators and lack of realistic chain of results from activities and outputs listed to achieve the intended outcomes of the regional MEA focal point project. These were partly addressed in the revised project planning documents. The project remained loosely defined with no refinements to design. More of the same type of outputs were added in the project revisions. More emphasis was given to biodiversity (versus chemicals) in later stages of the project as additional financing was obtained through the China fund earmarked for NBSAP revision in ASEAN countries.
201. The weakness in initial design of the regional MEA focal point project extends to the intended results and causality linkages between the expected changes in stakeholder behaviour and the project product and services outputs. The regional MEA focal point project was essentially about strengthening UNEP regional actions on MEA implementation with fair assumption that this is a precondition to improve national and regional implementation of chemicals and biodiversity MEA clusters, and better understand MEA issues under negotiation in global forums. The assumption that one person without funding could make a difference is a significant underestimation of the challenges and of what is needed to reinforce country capacities for effective MEA implementation.
202. The implementation strategy of the project recognizes key stakeholders in national MEA focal points and MEA secretariats and included some consultation in initial phases. The project was weak in deepening stakeholder analysis of needs and priorities, knowing the problem and incorporating appropriate actions in project design. This is understandable given the hundreds of national stakeholders, with a wide range of interests, but lesser in the case of MEA secretariats, given that project outcomes and expected accomplishment of the Sub-programme were dependent of collaborative arrangements between UNEP and MEA secretariats. MEA secretariats representatives interviewed complained about lack of consultation by UNEP in planning and ending the MEA focal point project.
203. What were the specific lessons of the pilot phase that began in 2009 was a question left largely unanswered, and the response may have been helpful to avoid the roll-out difficulties. The lack of evaluation of results and lessons learned from the pilot phase was surprisingly missing from the project approval process, as was the lack of specific

expression of interests from MEA secretariats and country partners regarding MEA implementation issues. It appears that in the transition to results-based management, there is a lingering sense that strategic planning is a packaging of project components and a necessary milestone to ensure funding rather than part of a circle of effective planning and management for continual improvement.

204. While the potential respective benefits of collaborative arrangements appear obvious, multiple obstacles prevented this from happening. Examples are given where UNEP can be more effective than the joint BRS such as for example dioxins and furans both because of specific specialized expertise but also because BRS cannot be an executing agency. The latter reason has not stopped CBD who, in practice, manages to execute projects.

Implementation and management

205. UNEP hired good competent, helpful and responsive staff, although there were differences in knowledge of each focal point regarding MEA specifics. They were able to draw attention to critical issues and build effective relationship of mutual trust. Some focal points through their cleverness and ingenuity managed substantive achievements on the biodiversity front. In the case of the MEA focal points on the chemical cluster, while competent, the lack of clarity in their roles and responsibilities vis à vis MEA secretariats was a hindrance to performance. Positive interpersonal relations and trust prompted collaborative actions, such as mercury pre COP, and country specific workshop on chemical synergies.

206. The joint BRS Secretariat and others were involved in selection of candidates for the MEA regional focal point postings, afterwards questions started to be asked. Were they regional office staff? Did they report to DELC or chemical cluster MEAs? According to BRS, accessing MEA focal point services was hindered by complex and unclear reporting lines, communication of on-going and planned actions of the focal points, and coordination. While the current Executive Secretary of BRS acknowledged the need for MEA focal point project, the former Executive Secretary was not in agreement, which was an issue affecting responsiveness and resulting performance.

207. The support to the chemical cluster, namely the joint chemical conventions, was tainted and severely weakened by this lack of clarity in the mechanism to request services. Some managers complained of the complexity of five levels of approvals to benefit from the services of regionally based chemical focal points. Competence of the focal point was known and respected. Moreover the joint chemical secretariat was not appropriately consulted. Later towards the end of the project, they requested support on half a dozen areas, agreed with regionally based chemical divisions, without a UNEP headquarter response.

208. There was a widespread feeling among MEA secretariats that UNEP needs to do more to support implementation of COP decisions. The perception was that UNEP had abandoned a past role of technical support to move towards more politicized and communication work, of lesser value to MEA secretariats. UNEP supervision and backstopping of MEA implementation, often loosely structured, on demand communication and facilitation service is appreciated by MEA secretariats.

209. The funding situation was also very unclear. Focal points were engaged yet lacked organizational support. The Africa focal point seemed to obtain funds, invited himself to meetings and was welcomed. There was no chemical focal point in LAC, until a consultant who had been extremely helpful, appeared on the list and was successful in obtaining the post.

210. There was an informal community of exchange and peer support among the MEA focal points which has given the project some form of global coherence adapted to specific context. Focal points now in different posts continue to have weekly exchanges among each other to share experiences. For example, the work on the LAC regional supplement of the Global Biodiversity Outlook benefited from the previous work carried out in West Asia, Asia and Africa.

Financial planning and management

211. Securing adequate and predictable funding to enable project was stated as critical factor to enable project activities. Yet, no or little funding was given for activities of regional focal points, other than salaries. No specific funding plan or measures or resource mobilization measures were identified other than suggesting that core UN

funding was needed. The project is qualified as demonstration of whether or not regional focal point arrangements are effective in improving project and programme delivery although the pilot started in 2009. The 2014 reporting in PIMS states that posts will be regularised and that this model is foreseen for other UNEP Sub-programmes.

212. The significant difference between the planned budget and actual expenditures also points to inadequate financial planning and management. Some project funds seem to have been used to support other long-standing UNEP activities, not part of the project, but related to MEA support, which used to be implemented under the costed workplans for DELC. The evaluation found no evidence of gross mismanagement of funds for personal gain, but the financial management fell short of appropriate financial management standards that are associated with effective and transparent project management.

Monitoring and Evaluation

213. Monitoring of progress of the projects was limited to cursory qualifiers in UNEP PIMS and quarterly ENRTP reports. There was no monitoring plan or budget, nor any adequate plans for evaluation. No mid-term evaluations or reviews (MTE/Rs) were carried out on the project. Monitoring budget and mid-term evaluation were specifically recommended by the project review Committee, given project risks and uncertainties and project budget included a 30 000\$ provision to carry out a mid-term evaluation. The project documents appear to confuse monitoring and evaluation. Other than annual reports to donors, there was no feedback from working group or well-functioning steering committee to review project issues and adjust work programs accordingly.

214. The ENRTP reviews led to revisions in the 2013 reports, as they were considered too cursory to respond to reporting requirements. Reading the 2014 report it does not appear to answer the initial review questions yet the report was approved by EU. It is unclear to what extent the review of report led to project revision beyond making the reporting more explicit.

LEO project

215. The key factors that facilitated good project performance were effective UNEP project management and backstopping and MEA stakeholder active participation.

UNEP project management, supervision and backstopping

216. The UNEP management responsiveness, attitude in helping to convene partners and facilitate their contributions, rather than "try to control the agenda" has been a key success factor. Partners working with the very small core UNEP project management have commended their work and the project manager's helpful attitude.

217. UNEP project management attitude towards partners and response to implementation issues demonstrated effective/ authentic leadership. CITES initial vision, and active co-chair together with DELC has also largely contributed to good advancement as did exemplary, financial planning and spending by outputs.

Stakeholder participation, public awareness and country ownership and drive

218. The LEO project carried out a very good assessment of potential users and their interest in the content of LEO, but fell a bit short verifying that the knowledge is captured and well used, and adjusted accordingly. This was later corrected with additional user surveys. So far, country ownership and drivenness has been weak, however, with the recent effort to survey users and solicit their feedback, there is the beginning of an effective feedback loop integrated in the project implementation.

219. Effective tools also directly contributed to performance, such as FAOs VOC bench. The BRS convention Secretariat hosts the INFORMEA server which is considered top of the line technology. Initially hosted by a company, a cumbersome and costly operational mechanism was changed to ensure effective update of material.

220. The partner stakeholder participation is a key success factor, the project clearly benefits from established partnerships in the MEA IKM. MEA's capacities differ; some are larger with good capacities, others small with little means. The IKM forum has contributed to developing partners' capacities. More could be done to reach out internally and to obtain institutional results, for example in the CBD Secretariat at the time of the evaluator's visit, a

link was broken on the Application Programming Interface (API), preventing public access to data. Although very simple to fix, and within technical capacities of the inforMEA/LEO focal point, action was blocked by lack of effective coordination with the technical team. This was later corrected, and was functional as of mid-March 2016. KM also requires dedicated people to organise the content. Although all MEAs have a Clearing House Mechanism (CHM), it has slightly different meanings and takes different forms. Access and benefit sharing is another example of multiple convention specific definitions, introducing some complexities, especially as there is a specific convention on the Access and benefit sharing. This sorting out requires exemplary rigour in handling the data and definitions, and is something that requires close team work within secretariats as it cannot realistically be done with a documentation officer alone. This is an example of internal cooperation that needs to be improved.

Sharing is the most powerful mechanism of leadership.

Monitoring and evaluation

221. The project monitoring benefited from straightforward and well tracked outputs. User response to e-learning was tracked. Monitoring of progress towards outcomes was initially weak but strengthened in late 2015 with further tracking of access and use. Workshop feedback was initially planned but not carried out.
222. Both mid-term and final evaluation were planned and budgeted. The mid-term evaluation was not carried out. The mid-term would likely have outlined the weaknesses in tracking outcomes and led to earlier adjustments to user feedback.

Biodiversity MEA synergies project

Preparation and readiness

223. The situation analysis of overall implementation problems and the global , regional and country level pathways to improvements were well outlined in the Biodiversity MEA synergies project design and planning documents. The biodiversity synergies project aims for similar outcomes to the regional MEA focal point project, yet there was no additional assessment of specific stakeholder needs, and MEA secretariats in particular, in the project design and planning stage. This is disappointing as this more recent project did benefit from potential learning from the earlier regional MEA focal point project and of well- framed guidance from the 2013 UNEP program manual. More attentive exchanges with MEA secretariats at the design stage would have likely added value and avoided the sense from MEA secretariats that the project lacked ambition and innovation.

Project implementation and management/ UNEP supervision and backstopping

224. Contract arrangements with WCMC, the supervision arrangements, and detailed sharing of responsibilities between UNEP and WCMC are unclear. There is no evidence of regular exchange with MEAs other than participation in their personal capacities to the two workshops discussion the options paper.
225. UNEP was clearly effective in channelling the option paper through the political and administrative processes leading to UNEA.

Stakeholder participation and public awareness

226. The implementation strategy of the project recognizes key stakeholders in national MEA focal points and MEA secretariats, as is the case with the other two projects. The project involved some consultation of NFPs in initial phases, as outlined in previous sections. However, it is weak in deepening analysis of needs and priorities with MEA secretariats and integrating these in project design. This weakness in effectively engaging MEA secretariats, significantly affected performance as project outcomes and expected accomplishment of the Sub-programme are dependent of collaborative arrangements between UNEP and MEA secretariats.
227. In the initial phases of the Biodiversity MEA project, the ways to address the lack of synergies were further defined by a group of interested and experienced parties and channelled along the decision process to the UNEA. The project engaged in an extensive 47 questions survey about issues and practices, directed at national focal points

and other key stakeholders. Reference is made to national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAP) considered a catalytic instrument for coherence and synergies at national level.

228. Some MEA expressed that they did not share the UNEP synergy vision, were never consulted on this initiative, and discovered the initiative in the workshop.

229. The evaluation found little evidence that MEA secretariats have engaged in increased collaborative arrangements that have strengthened coherence and synergy in implementation of Biodiversity MEAs as a result of the project. The project has set the scene for multiplying collaborative programming between MEA secretariats and UNEP by supporting the UNEA resolutions regarding enhanced synergies and mainstreaming⁵². There is evidence of collaboration between UNEP and CBD in the latter using the results of the project in the CBD forum. The workshop was not a joint initiative between the CBD Secretariat and UNEP (see par.155), however, UNEP was involved in the preparations and execution of workshop in some capacity⁵³.

Financial planning and management:

230. Some MEA complained of the workshop and project high expenses. The absence of financial data by outputs did not allow any analysis to assess whether this perception is based on fact.

⁵² Mainstreaming biodiversity for well-being UNEP/EA.2/L.18/Rev1.

UNEA-2. Enhancing the work of the United Nations Environment Programme in facilitating cooperation, collaboration and synergies among biodiversity-related conventions. UNEP/EA.2/L.19/Rev.1

⁵³ According to the Secretariat of CBD, UNEP was involved in a preparatory meeting held to design the workshop, in the delivery of preparatory webinars, through provision of materials for the workshop (e.g. the sourcebook, options paper and a study on capacity-building and awareness-raising needs) as well as through participation in the workshop itself with several participants.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

231. The three projects address components of environmental governance that are critical to advancing MEA implementation: ensuring regional presence and support to countries; systematizing information on international environmental laws and conventions, and demystifying the possibilities of synergies for more effective implementation of biodiversity-related MEAs. The shared objectives of the projects to advance coherence and synergy in implementation of MEAs respond to the recognized issue of MEA institutional fragmentation, overwhelming requirements of MEA implementation on developing countries, disconnect between UNEP and MEA secretariat work on MEAs, and, the resulting implementation gap. The projects are part of the same environmental governance sub-programme, yet there limited planned synergies among the three projects and too few linkages and interactions which lessened their strategic relevance.
232. The strongest evidence of potential impacts of the three projects in terms of how they are likely to foster change and collaboration in implementation of MEAs is the UNEA resolutions regarding synergies. Coherence and synergies in the UN system and multilateral environmental agreements is somewhat of an elusive goal and clearly a shared responsibility beyond UNEPs institutional capacities. The adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda with SDGs that incorporate MEAs and the related UN organizational changes is a positive new context favouring strengthened coherence and synergies. The biodiversity dimensions of the SDGs were highlighted in the more recent outputs of the biodiversity MEA synergy project. Time will tell the extent to which the project results and subsequent UNEA resolutions contributed to shaping a renewed collaborative system of environmental governance. Currently, there is little evidence that any of the three projects contributed to those encouraging on-going changes.
233. There is weak evidence of changes to Institutional frameworks and governance leading to sustained changes in country level implementation of MEAs that were triggered by the projects. UNEP regional presence and support to countries is continuously being strengthened. The projects did not contribute much in advancing country level implementation of MEAs. The only vehicle for country level institutional change appears to be the NBSAPs, promoted and supported by the Biodiversity MEA synergy and the MEA regional focal points projects. However, the extent to which the MEA focal point project, and the other two projects contributed to reinforce this movement is considered marginal, mainly because of the operational ambiguity and resulting weakness of the regional support provided by the MEA focal point project. The operative linkages between international conventions and national laws have yet to be highlighted by the LEO projects. Global actions of the projects were not explicitly focused on ensuring tailored support to country-level advances.

Regional MEA focal point project

234. The regional MEA focal point project responded to a recognized need for stronger regional presence in support of implementation of MEAs, expressed by CBD in particular. The eight MEA secretariats interviewed for this evaluation are unanimous on the relevance of UNEP regional presence supporting MEAs, as were, UNEP staff. The strategic relevance is strongest with Biodiversity-related MEA secretariats that are without regional or country implementation support structures. CBD, CITES and CMS secretariats agreed with UNEP on some priority activities and benefited from the services of regionally-based focal points to support countries in reviewing their NBSAPs and preparing for conference of MEA parties. The regional focal points also contributed to MEA-related guidance and reviews. The project was designed and planned without adequate consultation of other key stakeholders, namely the joint BRS secretariats and national MEA focal points.
235. The regional MEA focal point project was not rolled out in a manner that allowed effective support. There were issues in implementation of the project significantly affecting its performance, namely unresolved ambiguity in the mechanisms for collaborative arrangements and lack of funds to deliver advisory services. Vague mandates, lack of clarity on how to access services of regional MEA focal points and ineffectiveness in staff and project fund management diminished the returns on an investment of some 5 million dollars. The planned outputs were inexplicit, many confused with activities and partially achieved. The MEA focal points were clearly productive, some exceptionally resourceful but the outputs fell short of the intentions. There were significant differences between the

planned budget and expenditures of several budget items. Overall the project is considered 'unsatisfactory'. Table IV-1 provides an outline of the project ratings with respect to the evaluation criteria.

LEO project

236. The key factors that facilitated good performance of the LEO project were effective UNEP project management and backstopping and the active participation of MEA secretariats and other partner stakeholders. The InforMEA and LEO project are considered to be in many respects a model example of UNEP responsive support to MEAs, resulting in shared results that are beyond the sum of individual ones. UNEP exercised leadership, without undue control over the agenda, gaining respect and praise from MEA partners. The project builds on well-functioning partnerships. The planned outputs were adjusted to better accommodate partner initiatives. Cost effectiveness was very good due to effective management and significant in-kind contributions of MEA partners. The UNEP manager's responsiveness and helpful attitude in convening partners and facilitating their contributions was a key success factor.

237. The web tools in place have improved access to information on environmental law and conventions in a promising manner. The functionality of the ontology is considered extremely powerful, but more work is needed by MEAs to complete tagging for full effectiveness of the tool. The sustainability of the project results is likely due to the interoperability of the system, enabling MEA ownership and benefit, the open source technology as well as the value-added information and knowledge from the collective and continuous technical contribution and engagement of an established institutional partnership.

238. The project has so far paid too little attention to country user needs. While there was an initial stakeholder analysis and promising outreach plans, the project has only recently started to track user responses and incorporate them in continual improvements of web tools. The project is ready for additional outreach to both country users and internal audiences of partner organizations. Overall, the project performance is rated as 'satisfactory'. Table IV-2 outlines the project ratings with respect to the evaluation criteria expanded in section II-2.

Biodiversity MEA synergy project

239. The adoption of the UNEA resolutions on synergies among biodiversity related synergies is strong evidence that the knowledge products generated and captured by the project will reach large audiences. These products are the paper *Elaboration of options for enhancing synergies among biodiversity-related conventions* –so called the Options paper and the *Sourcebook of Opportunities for Enhancing Cooperation among the Biodiversity related Conventions at National and Regional level*, as well as related products. To what extent the synergy messages and examples lead to changes in national policy or institutional practice in implementation of MEAs is promising, but not yet demonstrated.

240. What appears to be a solid base, in the design of the biodiversity MEA synergy project did not adequately respond to the assessment of several MEAs regarding the type of support needed to advance implementation with increased cooperation and synergies. Whilst some evaluation respondents perceive the options paper and sourcebook to be helpful and effective, there is a sense among some respondents that the options paper and sourcebook lacked ambition, simply repeating what is already being done by MEAs. The UNEA-2 resolution inviting governing bodies of conventions to consider the measures outlined in the option paper is auguring in improved country ownership and drive-ness and deepening the assessment and planning of collaborative arrangements to improve coherence and synergies in implementation of MEAs.

241. Overall, the project performance is 'satisfactory' having delivered the planned outputs and effectively channelling them through the UNEA decision process. This conclusion is completed with the criteria assessment and ratings presented in table IV3.

Lessons Learned

242. The design and planning of the projects comprised a weak situation analysis to understand the problem and potential solutions through discussion with key stakeholders. The questions of what problematic situation the

project intended to change, the preconditions for this change to happen and who needs to be engaged were partly answered without adequate assessment of results pathways. This weakness in design and preparedness led to defining vague, overambitious outcomes, inadequate milestones and a less than satisfactory achievement of direct outcomes. Adequate situational analysis is the basis for elaborating a theory of change and requires allocation of dedicated time, in case of both new and routine projects. Structuring and downsizing the project into manageable components based on a proper situational analysis and thinking out results chains with key partners is more effective than packaging vague response actions.

243. The implementation strategy of all three projects recognizes national MEA focal points and MEA secretariats as key stakeholders, yet they were inadequate in deepening stakeholder analysis of needs, consultations on issues and priorities and integrating these in project plans. Insufficient consultations of MEA secretariats led to weak and largely undefined collaborative arrangements between UNEP and MEA secretariats undermining achievement of project outcomes. Exceptions are the LEO project partners benefiting from an established partnership and a history of collaboration. Stakeholder analysis and consultation is a prerequisite to adequate priority setting and focus to adjust UNEP responses to specific problems, gaps and needs.
244. The three projects fell short on implementation plans to verify that project generated information resulted in knowledge capture and use, namely by country level stakeholders. There were dozens of workshops held under the regional MEA focal point project with no evaluation by workshop participants, nor any follow up. Technical support services were provided on demand without feedback mechanism to establish if these services were adequate and appreciated. The LEO project initially tracked mainly website traffic, without user specifics. Client-based services, such as the Regional MEA focal point and LEO projects, require monitoring and self-evaluation to incorporate the results of informative project feedback loops and accordingly adjust project actions.
245. The project's strategic relevance was lessened by the lack of focus on specific MEA requirements. The specificities of MEAs require tailored solutions and the implementation gap cannot be addressed with generic approaches or with minor incremental steps. The extent the project products and related discussions recognized the specificities of the different conventions is questioned. Collaborative arrangements need to be carriers of change respecting the individual conventions. Addressing the implementation gap through specific issues flagged by the Parties and COP decisions better supports the overall goal of strengthened collaboration, in a party-driven rather than top-down approach to improve coherence and synergies.
246. The MEA focal points were to support different UNEP and MEA Secretariats' initiatives, meetings and workshops. However, missing operational mechanisms, vagueness in TORs and absence of dedicated funding for MEA focal points constrained the achievement of project outputs and intended outcomes. Human resources, however competent, can deliver more effective support to countries if their work is integrated in regional support structures with regional programming, space for multidisciplinary forums to address substantive integration issues, funding and support staff. A stable service structure ensuring continuity and quality responses is a prerequisite to build trust between UNEP advisors and country stakeholders and effectively serve as reference person in a region.
247. InforMEA partners working collaboratively on an equal level, with no competition, no hierarchy and offering a knowledge product that is beyond the sum contribution of each partner is a good example of cooperation among MEAs to increase coherence and synergies. UNEP project management and backstopping and the active participation of MEA stakeholders were key to effective project delivery. UNEP exercised leadership, without undue control over the agenda, gaining respect and praise from MEA a partner which was conducive to effective collaboration. The UNEP manager's responsiveness and helpful attitude in convening partners and facilitating their contributions has been a key success factor. These UNEP human resources competencies are critical to effective program delivery of collaborative initiatives.

Recommendations

248. On the basis of the conclusions of the evaluation, the following actions are recommended for the phase of the two on-going projects, to improve their effectiveness.

Future phase of the LEO project,

249. The LEO project has so far paid too little attention to country level use of information on environmental law and conventions for strengthened national law, enforcement and institutions. The project is ready for additional outreach to both country level target users and internal audiences of partner organizations. The next phase would benefit from an up-to-date outreach strategy that clarifies the intended clients and accelerates outreach to both internal audiences within MEA secretariats and specific users such as national focal points for MEAs on how the integrated information can assist them in their work. The outreach efforts would benefit from joint activities with other DELC projects promoting and assisting with the development of national laws incorporating commitments of international conventions.
250. The LEO project has only recently started to track and analyse user responses and incorporate the feedback to improve the web tool relevance and impacts. It is recommended that the next phase pursue this line by instituting regular monitoring of informative feedback from the target users. This involves developing system of continual improvement of web tools content and format by deepening the online user surveys and analysis and using this feedback to inform project response actions.
251. The LEO/InforMEA user experience is considered somewhat complicated and would benefit from simplified portal access to information. Dedicate efforts is recommended to clarify and simplify nomenclature on overlapping terminology: ontology, outlook, thesaurus and glossary while continuing the beneficial collation and comparison of MEA specific terminology.

Future phase of the Biodiversity MEA synergy project

252. The global level actions of the biodiversity MEA synergy project were not explicitly focused on advancing tailored UNEP-MEA joint support to country level advances in implementation. In preparation of the next phase of the project, and before engaging in the process, a theory of change (TOC) exercise is necessary. The TOC exercise would benefit from country stakeholder feedback on the country level options highlighted in the options paper and sourcebook. This TOC reflection should be complemented by discussion and agreement with MEAs on what needs to happen at the global level to facilitate advances in country level synergies to strengthen implementation. This exchange could take form of a planned UNEP-MEA workshop in the margin of a next MEA COP.
253. The evaluation findings indicate that in the development of collaborative arrangements, UNEP needs to be more responsive to MEA secretariats expertise and role. The next phase would benefit from an effective consultation with each of the MEA secretariats and with coordinating groups such as the Biodiversity Liaison Group (BLG) and/or the Environmental Management Group (EMG) in planning out the next steps. How could UNEP better help with MEA implementation? What can we do together with each of the MEAs? Responding to these questions is a necessary reflection following the UNEA resolutions and before engaging in the next phase of project implementation.
254. The 2030 Sustainable Development agenda encourages strengthened coherence and synergies among the MEA. Linking future projects actions to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its goals and targets (SDGs) would improve its relevance. Reviewing project actions to ensure they contribute to the SDG agenda processes as called for in UNEA resolutions. Consider explicitly a lead role for UNEP, bringing together substantive issues, representing different MEAs, joint UNEP-MEA actions, as well as the specific modalities for such coordination. The mutual supportive programming that is advocated by UNEA resolution is a good step in that direction.
255. The UNEA resolutions encouraged governing bodies of MEAs to consider project outputs -option paper and the sourcebook. It is recommended to prepare, in consultation with MEA secretariats, a country outreach plan for the those outputs as well as a response strategy with user feedback mechanisms to deepen and improve value for in country implementation.
256. The regional MEA focal point project having ended, the next phase of the project would benefit from explicit operative links to strengthened regional support to implementation of biodiversity-related MEAs. In consultation with MEA secretariats, DELC should reconsider adding UNEP regional posts to represent biodiversity-related MEAs, wearing the hat of all in each of the regions, providing input to the UNDAF processes and contributing to regional

processes on the 2030 Agenda. Consider using the unused PSC of administrative agreements with MEAs to finance such posts. In addition to close collaboration with MEA secretariats, this potential collaborative arrangement should be elaborated with the UNEP regional office to ensure regional programme support implementation of MEA COP decisions. The operative links of the next phase would also benefit from explicit contributions from the UNEP thematic sub-programme on Ecosystem Management.

Evaluation Ratings

Table IV-1 Support for Implementation of the Biodiversity and Ecosystem and the Chemicals and Waste Cluster of Multilateral Environmental Agreements-Regional MEA Focal Point Project Rating-		
Criterion	Summary Assessment	Ratings⁵⁴
<i>A. Strategic relevance</i>	The project responded to a recognised need to strengthen regional and country level MEA implementation with UNEP support. Improving coherence and synergies is an indisputable principle of good governance. Seven MEAs and UNEP staff interviewed were unanimous on the relevance of UNEP regional presence supporting MEAs. The relevance of the project to country partners is one sided and uncertain given the unqualified demand and limited offer of support services.	S
<i>B. Achievement of outputs</i>	Numerous workshops and meetings were supported by regional MEA focal points. They also contributed to significant guidance and reviews such as regional biodiversity outlooks. The planned outputs were vague, many confused with activities and partially achieved. The MEA focal points were clearly productive, some exceptionally resourceful but the outputs were short of the intentions.	MS
<i>C. Effectiveness:</i>	The project contributed to reinforce UNEP regional presence and MEA support. There is weak evidence of strengthened country and regional MEA implementation, unlikely impacts and overall little progress on improving coherence and synergies that can be attributed to this regional presence.	MU
<i>Achievement of direct outcomes</i>	There is weak evidence of strengthened country and regional MEA implementation. Few examples of increased understanding of negotiated MEA issues and adoption of best practices for implementation from UNEP advice, nor of strengthened national and regional implementation of chemical and biodiversity related MEAs.	MU
<i>Likelihood of impacts</i>	Positive long term impacts resulting from the project are unlikely.	U
<i>D. Sustainability and replication</i>	Issues of ambiguous delivery mechanism, lack of financing, ineffective management of demand for services and weak stakeholder engagement undermined sustainability and replication value.	U
<i>E. Efficiency</i>	Most MEA focal points found ways to carry out useful activities and mobilise resources. Some funds were made available with too little time to be spent efficiently.	U
<i>F. Factors affecting project performance</i>		
<i>1. Preparation and readiness</i>	Loosely defined project design with vague, unrealistic chain of results and no appropriate oversight and support means undermined project performance.	U
<i>2. Project implementation and management</i>	Lack of clarity in the mechanisms for access to focal point services, funding gaps and lack of backstopping negatively affected performance.	MU
<i>3. Stakeholders participation and public awareness</i>	While biodiversity MEAs were well served on meeting and workshop support, they were not consulted on project design and end of services. Country stakeholders participation was limited to workshops and meetings convened by MEAs.	MU
<i>4. Country ownership and driven-ness</i>	There were no country partner consultation, poor engagement and no means to track and manage demand for services.	U
<i>5. Financial planning and management</i>	Inadequate financial planning and flows, significant difference between planned budget items and expenditures	U
<i>6. UNEP supervision and backstopping</i>	MEA focal points worked in the regions, with little UNEP supervision and backstopping. Poor management adjustments to the shortcomings.	MU
<i>7. Monitoring and evaluation</i>	Limited cursory qualifiers, no adequate monitoring, nor midterm evaluation, although requested by PRC and budgeted.	MU

⁵⁴ The criteria are rated on a six-point scale as follows: Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability is rated from Highly Likely (HL) down to Highly Unlikely (HU). The overall project rating is derived from the sub-criteria ratings by using an Evaluation Office calculation which weights the different evaluation parameters according to their importance.

Table IV-1 Support for Implementation of the Biodiversity and Ecosystem and the Chemicals and Waste Cluster of Multilateral Environmental Agreements-Regional MEA Focal Point Project Rating-		
Criterion	Summary Assessment	Ratings⁵⁴
Overall project rating	The project was of strategic relevance, yet weak design and preparedness, lack of clarity in mechanisms for collaboration and absence of funds to deliver basic support services led to rolling out issues significantly undermining performance.	U

Table A4-2 Law and Environment Outlook: Web-Tools for the Implementation and Enforcement of International Environmental Law and Internationally Agreed Goals and Targets” – LEO Project Rating

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Rating
<i>A. Strategic relevance</i>	The collaborative work of MEAs and interoperability by design to produce multi –organizational information and data is an effective example of strategic value-added synergy. The relevance to country needs is less obvious.	S
<i>B. Achievement of outputs</i>	The planned outputs were adjusted to better accommodate partner initiatives. The e-learning portal is well used, as is the single window access. The functionalities of the ontology are in place but not yet fully populated for effective use.	S
<i>C. Effectiveness:</i>	The functionalities of the LEO web tools are promising and the partnership model developed by the project has proven effectiveness.	S
<i>Achievement of direct outcomes</i>	The web tools in place have improved access to information on environmental law and conventions and its use in a promising manner. The functionality is considered powerful but more work is needed by MEAs to complete tagging for full usability and effectiveness of the tool.	MS
<i>Likelihood of impacts</i>	There is good likelihood of positive impacts resulting from the projects as the key drivers are in place for the project to achieve its full effectiveness.	S
<i>D. Sustainability and replication</i>	Sustainability is likely due to interoperability of the system enabling MEA ownership and benefit, open source technology with collective and continuous technical contribution and engagement by established institutional partners.	S
<i>E. Efficiency</i>	Project builds on well-functioning partnerships and cost effectiveness is very good due to effective management.	HS
<i>F. Factors affecting project performance</i>		
<i>1. Preparation and readiness</i>	Well designed and planned with flexibility.	S
<i>2. Projects implementation and management</i>	The UNEP manager’s responsiveness, helpful attitude in convening partners and facilitating their contributions has been a key success factor.	HS
<i>3. Stakeholders participation and public</i>	Good stakeholder analysis and promising outreach plans.	S

**Table A4-2 Law and Environment Outlook: Web-Tools for the Implementation and Enforcement of International Environmental Law and Internationally Agreed Goals and Targets” –
LEO Project Rating**

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Rating
<i>awareness</i>		
<i>4. Country ownership and driven-ness</i>	Weak attention so far to country user needs.	U
<i>5. Financial planning and management</i>	Project benefitted from a well-structured budget by outputs	HS
<i>6. UNEP supervision and backstopping</i>	As per item 2 above	HS
<i>7. Monitoring and evaluation</i>	Straightforward tracking of progress on outputs. Improved tracking of outcomes with user surveys. Mid-term and final evaluations were planned, no mid-term carried out.	MS
Overall project rating	Well planned and effectively managed MEA support	S

Table A4-3 Improving the Effectiveness of and Cooperation among Biodiversity-Related Conventions and Exploring Opportunities or Further Synergies”

Biodiversity MEA Synergy Project-Rating

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Rating
<i>A. Strategic relevance</i>	The project responds to UNEP Governing Council 2012 decisions on international environmental Governance inviting further activities to improve the effectiveness of MEA implementation with enhanced cooperation and synergies among biodiversity conventions, as well as to COP decisions of key Biodiversity MEAs encouraging country level cooperation and synergies among MEAs in the implementation of the conventions, namely with NBSAPs.	S
<i>B. Achievement of outputs</i>	The two main outputs produced: the Option paper and Sourcebook, served as basis in CBD workshop reflection on enhancing synergies and follow up workshops. The second UNEA resolution welcomed the project results.	S
<i>C. Effectiveness:</i>	UNEP was successful in mobilising technical knowledge and leadership skills to incite adoption of collaborative integrated practices in MEA implementation. There is also good advancement on other drivers of change.	S
<i>Achievement of direct outcomes</i>	There is a promising engagement that MEA parties acknowledge biodiversity MEA implementation issues and adopt further means of cooperation and collaboration.	MS
<i>Likelihood of impacts</i>	There is good likelihood of positive impacts resulting from the projects as the key drivers are in place for the project to achieve its full effectiveness. National biodiversity focal points participated in identifying means for improving cooperation in implementation of biodiversity MEAs. MEA secretariats and national biodiversity focal points are engaged to cooperate in MEA implementation, namely on NBSAPs. UNEP effectively communicated potential solutions in UNEA and there are strong signs of future use in UN processes.	S
<i>D. Sustainability and replication</i>	The UNEA-2 resolution inviting the governing bodies of biodiversity-related conventions, other relevant United Nations bodies and Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services IPBES to further strengthen their cooperation and enhance synergies among them, considering the results of the biodiversity MEA synergy project anchors the sustainability of biodiversity MEA synergies. The extent the synergy messages and examples will lead to changes in national policy or institutional practice in implementation of MEAS is promising, but not yet demonstrated.	S
<i>E. Efficiency</i>	There were no tracked expenditures by outputs. MEAs	MS

Table A4-3 Improving the Effectiveness of and Cooperation among Biodiversity-Related Conventions and Exploring Opportunities or Further Synergies”

Biodiversity MEA Synergy Project-Rating

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Rating
	questioned the efficiency of meetings to collate MEA experiences. There was some collaboration with other biodiversity-related projects.	
<i>F. Factors affecting projects performance</i>		
<i>1. Preparation and readiness</i>	Problems to solve and pathways to change were outlined in situational analysis, yet there was no consultative assessment of country stakeholders, or of relevant MEA secretariats on project design and plans.	S
<i>2. Projects implementation and management</i>	Engagement with MEA secretariats was insufficient.	MU
<i>3. Stakeholders participation and public awareness</i>	The implementation strategy of the project recognizes key stakeholders in national MEA focal points (NFP) and MEA secretariat. The project involved some consultation of NFPs in initial phases, without deepening analysis of needs and priorities with MEA secretariats which significantly affected performance.	S
<i>4. Country ownership and driven-ness</i>	Countries were asked to provide examples and outline benefits of what they are doing, without adequate consultation on needs. The UNEA-2 resolution inviting governing bodies of conventions to consider the measures outlined in the option paper is promising and should improve country ownership and drive-ness.	U
<i>5. Financial planning and management</i>	Lack of financial tracking by outputs prevented assessment of cost effectiveness.	MS
<i>6. UNEP supervision and backstopping</i>	UNEP DELC and WCMC concentrated their work on different components of the project. Project management changes led to ambiguities on respective responsibilities.	MS
<i>7. Monitoring and evaluation</i>	No effective monitoring plan.	MU
<i>Overall projects rating</i>	Project produced the planned document and successfully communicated and channelled these through the UNEA decision process. There are good signs of future use in UN processes.	S

ANNEXES

Annex 1. Organisations and persons consulted

MISSION TO MONTRÉAL February 15-17, 2016

Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Montreal, Quebec, CANADA

Convention on Biological Diversity

Lijie Cai - *Programme Officer SCBD*

David Cooper *Deputy Executive Secretary*

Olivier de Munck - *Programme Officer*

David Duthie - *Senior Programme Officer*

Sarat Babu Gidda - *Programme Officer*

Robert Hoft - *Programme Officer*

Kata Koppel - *Documentation Officer*

Neil Pratt - *Senior Environmental Affairs Officer*

Chantal Robichaud *Programme Assistant*

Nadine Saad - *Programme Officer*

Cartagena protocol on biosafety

Charles Gbedemah - *Principal Officer*

Nagoya Protocol on Access & Benefit Sharing

Valérie Normand - *Nagoya Senior Programme Officer*

MISSION TO GENEVA with Ms Tiina Piironen UNEP evaluation office- February 29-March 4 2016

Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)

John Scanlon - *Secretary-General (by Skype March 17 2016)*

Susanne Bengtsson - *Team Leader, Administrative Services*

Haruko Okusu - *Chief, Knowledge Management and Outreach Services*

Juan Carlos Vasquez - *Chief, Legal Affairs and Compliance*

Marcos Regis Da Silva (former CITES knowledge management expert by Skype February 25)

Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions

Laura Meszaros - *Programme Officer, Office of the Executive Secretary*

Maria-Cristina Cardenas Fischer *Adviser, Policy and Strategy; Head technical assistance*

Osmany Pereira Gonzalez - *Manager, Information and Conference Services*

Secretariat of RAMSAR Convention on wetlands

Ania Grobicki - *Acting Secretary General*

Maria Rivera - *Senior Advisor for the Americas*

Paul Ouedraogo - *Senior Advisor for Africa*

Edmund Jennings - *Documentation Officer*

Manuel Kern - *IT Officer*

Secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)

Bradnee Chambers - Executive Secretary (by Skype March22)

IUCN Environmental Law center (by Skype march 16-2016)

Ning Li – Programme Officer, IUCN Environmental Law Centre

Alexandra Fante - Documentation Officer, IUCN Environmental Law Centre

United Nations Environment Programme UNEP

Jiri Hlavacek - Special Advisor, Chief of the Environmental Governance and Conventions Branch and Head of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements Support and Cooperation, DELC, UNEP

Eva Duer - Legal Officer and Team Leader, MEA Information and Knowledge Management, DELC UNEP

Balakrishna Pisupati - Head, Biodiversity, Land and Governance Programme, DELC, UNEP

Katharina Rogalla Von Biberstein - Programme Officer, UNEP-WCMC

Cristina Zucca - Coordinator of the Environmental Governance Sub-programme

Jacob Duer –Coordinator, Minamata Convention on Mercury team, Chemicals and Waste Branch, DTIE, UNEP

Jacqueline Alvarez –Senior Programme Officer and Team Leader of the Science and Risk Management team, DTIE Chemicals and Waste Branch, DTIE, UNEP

Sheila Logan – Programme Officer, Minamata Convention on Mercury team, Chemicals and Waste Branch, DTIE, UNEP

Sandrine Marques – ENRTP Coordinator

Former Regional MEA focal points; currently in employment elsewhere in UNEP (by Skype)

Mijke Hertoghs - Regional Office for Europe

Diane Klaimi – Regional Coordinator for the Ecosystem Management Sub-programme, UNEP Regional Office for West Asia (ROWA)

Iyngararasan Mylvakanam – UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP)

Alberto Pacheco – UNEP Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean

Makiko Yashiro, Regional Coordinator of the Ecosystem Management Sub-programme, UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP)

Kamar Yousuf - DELC

Annex 2. Documents consulted

Project planning documents:

- UNEP Medium-term Strategy 2010-2013 and 2014-2017 and Programmes of Work,

- UNEP Governing Council Decisions GC 21/23;GC21/27;GC22/27;GC22/21
- Project documents for all three projects including the logical framework and its budget
- Project revision documents
- Minutes of the projects review committee (PRC) meetings at approval for all three projects
- Progress reports to ENRTP

Project outputs:

Regional MEA focal point project

- Sample workshop outputs from UNEP EO dropbox folders

Biodiversity MEA synergies project

- Option paper : Elaboration of options for enhancing synergies among biodiversity-related conventions
- *Sourcebook of opportunities for enhancing cooperation among the biodiversity related conventions at national and regional level* and associated documents at <https://nationalmeasynergies.wordpress.com/the-sourcebook/>
- Briefing note to Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP *Elaboration of options for enhancing synergies among biodiversity –related conventions*
- NBSAP Forum web platform
- December 08 2015 Webinar on Biodiversity and SDGs

LEO project

<http://leo.informea.org/>

<http://informea.org/>

<http://e-learning.informea.org/>

Other references

UNEP Programming manual 2013

Annex 3. Financial information

Table A3-1 Regional focal Point MEA Project Summary of Expenditure

Budget lines	Details	BUDGET	Sub-total	Environment	Total
			Donor ⁵⁵ XB	Fund (EF)	
1101	MEA FP Biodiversity for Latin America & the Caribbean (P4)	480,000	312,540		312,540
1102	MEA FP Chemicals for Europe Geneva (P4)	645,000	598,580		598,580
1103	MEA FP Biodiversity For Asia & Pacific Bangkok (P4)	492,000	287,235		287,235
1104	MEA FP Biodiversity Nairobi(P4)	570,000	638,642		638,642
1105	MEA FP Chemicals Nairobi (P4)	570,000	631,837		631,837
1106	MEA FP Biodiversity for West Asia (P4)	588,000	602,973		602,973
1107	MEA FP Chemicals For Asia & Pacific Bangkok (P4)	328,000	385,913		385,913
1108	MEA FP Chemicals for Latin America & the Caribbean	320,000	-		-
	Subtotal salaries	3,993,000			3,457,720
1200	Consultants	-	50,614		50,614
1600	Travel	440,000	285,031	60,000	345,031
2200	Subcontracts	168,000	747,850		747,850
3200	Group Training	410,000	62,646		62,646
5200	Reporting Costs	34,000	-		-
5201	Project Visibility	45,000	-		-
5500	Evaluation	30,000	9,000		9,000
	Total	9,113,000	4,612,861	60,000	8,130,581
	Programme Support Cost	#####	386,572	-	386,572
	Grand Total	5,596,200	4,999,433	60,000	8,517,153
	XB secured i.e. Income Received		5,317,264	60,000	5,377,264
	Unspent Balance		317,831	-	#####

⁵⁵ Donors include the European Commission, Norway, China, Spain, Sweden and (undisclosed) counterparts

Table A3-2 LEO project Summary expenditure

Component/sub-component/output	Estimated cost at design	Project revision	Actual expenditure				Expenditure ratio Dec 2015 actual/planned
			2013	2014	2015	Total	
Output 1 total							
a.-InforMEA enhancements	213 900	224 900.00	34 920.42	47 765.17	52 448.10	135 133.70	60%
b.-InforMEA search facility	97 000	108 000.00	0	34 576.34	30 299.03	64 875.37	60%
c.-InforMEA e-learning facility	177 000	188 000.00	0	69 576.34	92 149.96	161 726.30	86%
d.-InforMEA Trade -related	75 000	0	0	0	0	0	0
Output 2 Thesaurus	194 000	225 600.00	0	98 740.22	118 351.64	217 091.86	96%
Output 3 Touching the ground	223 000	234 000.00	0	32 500.00	75 000.00	107 500.00	46%
Output 4 LEO Outlook	300 000	93 504.00	18 080.00	55 424.00	20 000	93 504.00	100%
Total outputs	1 279 900	1 074 004.00	53 000.42	338 582.08	388 248.73	779 831.23	73%
Staff costs	748 975 ⁵⁶						
PSC costs			2 444.30	24 272.95	25 775.86	52 493.11	
Total project							

⁵⁶ In kind secured contribution from partners total 925 725\$

Table A3-3 Biodiversity MEA Synergies Project Summary expenditures

INPUTS	BUDGET	EXPENDITURES		
		Sub-Total (XB)	Environment Fund (EF)	TOTAL
Project Personnel	1,408,209	404,001	632,421 ⁵⁷	1,036,422
Consultants	74,700	937		937
Travel	89,125	47,178		47,178
Contracts	-	526,340		526,340
Meetings	741,175	333,961		333,961
Reporting Costs	116,749			
Evaluation	40,000	21,462		21,462
Direct Cost	2,469,958	1,333,879	632,421	1,966,300
PSC	128,642	105,612		105,612
Total	2,598,600	1,439,491	632,421	2,071,912
XB Secured_INCOME rcvd		1,639,911 ⁵⁸		
UNSPENT		200,421		200 421

⁵⁷ Environment fund contribution of \$600,000 towards staff costs and 32,421 towards activities

⁵⁸ Exchange rate (USD/Euro) for EC funding 0.754

Annex 4. Quality Assessment of the Evaluation Report

Evaluation Title:

Portfolio evaluation of selected UNEP MEA projects

All UNEP evaluations are subject to a quality assessment by the Evaluation Office. The quality assessment is used as a tool for providing structured feedback to the evaluation consultants.

The quality of both the draft and final evaluation report is assessed and rated against the following criteria:

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Draft Report Rating	Final Report Rating
Substantive report quality criteria			
A. Quality of the Executive Summary: Does the executive summary present the main findings of the report for each evaluation criterion and a good summary of recommendations and lessons learned? (Executive Summary not required for zero draft)	Draft report: The executive summary provides a brief overview of the evaluated projects, and presents main findings, including achievement of higher level results. It provides a summary of lessons and recommendations. Final report: same as above.	S	S
B. Project context and project description: Does the report present an up-to-date description of the socio-economic, political, institutional and environmental context of the project, including the issues that the project is trying to address, their root causes and consequences on the environment and human well-being? Are any changes since the time of project design highlighted? Is all essential information about the project clearly presented in the report (objectives, target groups, institutional arrangements, budget, changes in design since approval etc.)?	Draft report: The report describes the project context, objectives and components, target areas and groups, milestones and key dates, implementation arrangements, project partners, financial resources and changes during project design for all projects. Final report: Same as above.	S	S
C. Strategic relevance: Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of strategic relevance of the intervention in terms of relevance of the project to global, regional and national environmental issues and needs, and UNEP strategies and programmes?	Draft report: The report provides a well-reasoned and evidence-based assessment of relevance for all three projects. Final report: Same as above.	HS	HS
D. Achievement of outputs: Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of outputs delivered by the intervention (including their quality)?	Draft report: The report provides a complete assessment of the achievement and quality of outputs, it clearly assesses the realised outputs against what was planned. Final report:	HS	HS

<p>E. Presentation of Theory of Change: Is the Theory of Change of the intervention clearly presented? Are causal pathways logical and complete (including drivers, assumptions and key actors)?</p>	<p>Draft report: A ToC is presented for all projects. The causal pathways could be more thoroughly explained and the ToC, in general, could include a greater level of detail.</p> <p>Final report: Same as above</p>	MS	MS
<p>F. Effectiveness - Attainment of project objectives and results: Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the achievement of the relevant outcomes and project objectives?</p>	<p>Draft report: In general, the assessment of effectiveness is adequate and includes the assessment of the achievement of outcomes and likelihood of impact. In places, evidence and conclusions could be presented in a clearer manner. The drivers and assumptions could be more clearly discussed.</p> <p>Final report: The report presents an evidence-based assessment of effectiveness.</p>	MS	S
<p>G. Sustainability and replication: Does the report present a well-reasoned and evidence-based assessment of sustainability of outcomes and replication / catalytic effects?</p>	<p>Draft report: Sustainability of the three projects has been assessed. The assessment could reflect the four sub-criteria of sustainability in a clearer manner.</p> <p>Final report: Same as above.</p>	MS	MS
<p>H. Efficiency: Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of efficiency? Does the report present any comparison with similar interventions?</p>	<p>Draft report: The report presents an adequate assessment of efficiency. Timeliness of delivery could have been discussed in more depth.</p> <p>Final report: Same as above.</p>	MS	MS
<p>I. Factors affecting project performance: Does the report present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of all factors affecting project performance? In particular, does the report include the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used; and an assessment of the quality of the project M&E system and its use for project management?</p>	<p>Draft report: The key factors affecting performance have been discussed for all projects. Some clarifications and information would be needed to support the section.</p> <p>Final report: The key factors affecting performance have been discussed for all projects.</p>	S	S
<p>J. Quality of the conclusions: Do the conclusions highlight the main strengths and weaknesses of the project, and connect those in a compelling story line?</p>	<p>Draft report: The conclusions describe the main strengths and weaknesses of the three projects in a brief and concise manner.</p> <p>Final report: Same as above</p>	S	S
<p>K. Quality and utility of the recommendations: Are recommendations based on explicit evaluation findings? Do recommendations specify the actions necessary to correct existing conditions or improve</p>	<p>Draft report: Recommendations should more clearly describe the context from which they are derived from, defining the problem which the recommendation is</p>	MU	S

<p>operations ('who?' 'what?' 'where?' 'when?'). Can they be implemented?</p>	<p>proposing to solve and providing a stronger description of corrective action.</p> <p>Final report: The report presents specific recommendations that are well reasoned and based on explicit evaluation findings. The structure of recommendations could be further improved.</p>		
<p>L. Quality and utility of the lessons: Are lessons based on explicit evaluation findings? Do they suggest prescriptive action? Do they specify in which contexts they are applicable?</p>	<p>Draft report: Lessons should more clearly describe the evaluation finding from which they are derived from and they could be more prescriptive. Some lessons would be better formulated as recommendations.</p> <p>Final report: The lessons are based on evaluation findings and the prescriptive action could be further clarified.</p>	MS	S
Report structure quality criteria			
<p>M. Structure and clarity of the report: Does the report structure follow EOU guidelines? Are all requested Annexes included?</p>	<p>Draft report: The structure follows EOU guidelines, not all required annexes are included.</p> <p>Final report: Same as above</p>	S	S
<p>N. Evaluation methods and information sources: Are evaluation methods and information sources clearly described? Are data collection methods, the triangulation / verification approach, details of stakeholder consultations provided? Are the limitations of evaluation methods and information sources described?</p>	<p>Draft report: The evaluation methods and information sources have been described in an overall manner.</p> <p>Final report: Same as above</p>	MS	MS
<p>O. Quality of writing: Was the report well written? (clear English language and grammar)</p>	<p>Draft report: The report was adequately written. In places, the flow of the text could be improved and the report should be edited.</p> <p>Final report: The quality of writing was satisfactory</p>	MS	S
<p>P. Report formatting: Does the report follow EOU guidelines using headings, numbered paragraphs etc.</p>	<p>Draft report: The report formatting could be improved, particularly in regards standardizing styles.</p> <p>Final report: The report formatting is satisfactory.</p>	MS	S
OVERALL REPORT QUALITY RATING		S	S

The quality of the evaluation process is assessed at the end of the evaluation and rated against the following criteria:

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments		Rating
Evaluation process quality criteria			
Q. Preparation: Was the evaluation budget agreed and approved by the EOU? Was inception report delivered and approved prior to commencing any travel?			5
R. Timeliness: Was a TE initiated within the period of six months before or after project completion? Was an MTE initiated within a six month period prior to the project's mid-point? Were all deadlines set in the ToR respected?			4
S. Project's support: Did the project make available all required documents? Was adequate support provided to the evaluator(s) in planning and conducting evaluation missions?			5
T. Recommendations: Was an implementation plan for the evaluation recommendations prepared? Was the implementation plan adequately communicated to the project?			6
U. Quality assurance: Was the evaluation peer-reviewed? Was the quality of the draft report checked by the evaluation manager and peer reviewer prior to dissemination to stakeholders for comments? Did EOU complete an assessment of the quality of the final report?			6
V. Transparency: Were the draft ToR and evaluation report circulated to all key stakeholders for comments? Was the draft evaluation report sent directly to EOU? Were all comments to the draft evaluation report sent directly to the EOU and did EOU share all comments with the commentators? Did the evaluator(s) prepare a response to all comments?			5
W. Participatory approach: Was close communication to the EOU and project maintained throughout the evaluation? Were evaluation findings, lessons and recommendations adequately communicated?			5
X. Independence: Was the final selection of the evaluator(s) made by EOU? Were possible conflicts of interest of the selected evaluator(s) appraised?			6
OVERALL PROCESS RATING			5

Rating system for quality of evaluation reports

A number rating 1-6 is used for each criterion: Highly Satisfactory = 6, Satisfactory = 5, Moderately Satisfactory = 4, Moderately Unsatisfactory = 3, Unsatisfactory = 2, Highly Unsatisfactory = 1

The overall quality of the evaluation report is calculated by taking the mean score of all rated quality criteria.