

Global Environmental Governance

“In spite of restrictions in many of the countries where UNEP has presence, we remain open for business.”

**United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP),
Executive Director, Inger Andersen**

It is important that both the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the multilateral environment agreements (MEAs) we support remain active and engaged, and that global environmental governance continues to function during COVID-19 to sustain momentum on environmental priorities.

COVID-19 and Global Environmental Governance

The pandemic calls for environmental diplomacy to adapt to a new reality. Governing bodies of UNEP and the MEAs will be holding meetings online to conduct their work. UNEP will work with MEAs, inter-governmental fora, governments and stakeholders, to find solutions to modernize global environmental governance and virtual diplomacy.

UNEP is reviewing legal, logistical, environmental and political implications for modernizing environmental governance. We aim to present solutions to Member States and Parties to MEAs for virtual meetings and low carbon, environmentally friendly, meeting platforms.

UNEP's Response

UNEP is developing a study of the practices of inter-governmental bodies with regards to virtual/online meetings, applying rules of procedure to such meetings, identifying barriers and reforms.

In coordination with UN offices for conference services in Nairobi and New York, we are addressing logistical challenges related to online platforms and virtual meetings, and training staff on these issues.

Virtual meetings have been successfully launched and the bureaus of inter-governmental meetings (that consist of representatives of Member States) now meet online regularly. Recently, the UNEP Committee of Permanent Representatives held its 150th meeting virtually, and MEAs are also moving ahead virtually—as, for example, with the Twelfth Meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group of the Basel Convention in June 2020.

Way Forward

UNEP is using the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to promote policy coherence, integrated approaches and coordination at all levels of the governance system. We will conduct consultations and coordinate with the secretariats of the MEAs and UNEP staff in regional offices when modernizing global environmental governance. This includes working across the thematic MEA clusters to explore how to provide a unified and collective response to international crises, including pandemics, while supporting the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Modernizing global environmental governance will require ongoing conversations with Member States, Parties, observers and stakeholders including countries that host UNEP Offices and MEA secretariats.