



Distr.: General  
23 December 2020  
English only



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

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

Nairobi (online), 22–26 February 2021\*  
Item 5 of the provisional agenda\*\*

**International environmental policy and  
governance issues**

**Information on implementation of resolution 4/7 on  
environmentally sound management of waste\*\*\***

**Note by the Executive Director**

**Introduction**

1. This document provides an update on progress made in the implementation of resolution 4/7, as well as a set of recommendations for further actions by UNEA 5.
2. In its resolution 4/7, on environmentally sound management of waste, the United Nations Environment Assembly requested the Executive Director to strengthen United Nations Environment Programme's International Environment Technology Centre (UNEP-IETC) and its role and continue assisting countries' ongoing efforts to achieve environmentally sound waste management. UNEP was requested to maintain inventories of environmentally sound waste management technologies, continue sharing experiences, lessons learned as well as assisting member states and countries to strengthen and enhance implementation of the environmentally sound waste management of waste.
3. UNEP has strengthened the institutional positioning of the waste agenda within the organization and UNEP-IETC will play a key role delivering the waste activities, and further collaboration in-house as well as with other agencies. UNEP has maintained inventories of environmentally sound waste management technologies and practices, through global and regional waste management outlooks as well as technical reports on specific waste and waste management issues. UNEP continued providing support and working with member states in developing and implementing innovative solid waste management solutions, strategies and technologies in close engagement with local partners. UNEP also continued sharing of experiences, lessons learned and success stories to stakeholders UNEP have provided support for implementing waste prevention and sound management policies and good practices in low- and middle-income countries. In response to

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

\*\* UNEP/EA.5/1/Rev.1.

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

COVID-19, UNEP published several resources providing concrete recommendations on how to manage the influx of waste during the pandemic.

## **I. Progress on implementation of the resolution**

### **A. Strengthen the United Nations Environment Programme's International Environment Technology Centre (IETC) and its role in the provision of technological advice and capacity-building concerning environmentally sound waste management and enhance cooperation with the regional centres of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants**

4. UNEP strengthened the institutional positioning of the waste agenda within the organization by developing a distinct global waste programme with a focus on key waste streams *inter alia*: plastics, electronics/e-waste, extractives, the built environment, and food systems. UNEP-IETC will play a primary role to deliver this global waste programme and contribute to cross-divisional work on waste, circularity and sustainable consumption and production as well as contribute to the framework for the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020 once established and the implementation of multilateral environment agreements as appropriate. UNEP-IETC will continue to work closely with regional offices and the regional centres of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants in line with expected accomplishments of UNEP's Subprogramme 5. UNEP is also partner in the Basel Plastic Waste Partnership with IETC contributing to working group 3 and other parts of UNEP working on marine litter, environmental law, regional seas conventions and action plans, and the life cycle initiative contributing to the other three working groups.

5. Since UNEA-4 UNEP-IETC has been closely engaged with the UNEP GEF Chemicals and Waste unit on the elaboration of the flagship GEF ISLANDS programme on sustainable waste and chemicals management in Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The programme is an interagency collaboration lead by UNEP and works across three SIDS regions covering over 30 SIDS in the Caribbean, Indian Ocean and Pacific regions. The IETC team has actively supported the development of the programme's child project for coordination, communications and knowledge management and has worked with units across UNEP to map the status of existing knowledge management tools which could support the waste management elements to the programme in all regions.

### **B. Maintain inventories of environmentally sound waste management technologies and practices, including those introduced in the global and regional waste management outlooks, and share those inventories and practices with Member States**

6. The UNEP GEF Chemical and Waste Unit is working with UNEP-IETC in areas including the environmentally sound disposal of PCB wastes in Africa, the demonstration of non-thermal technologies for the destruction of POPs waste in Central Asia, the stabilization of mercury wastes to ensure long term safe disposal, the application of technologies for the environmentally sound management of electronic waste and identification, and demonstration of technologies for the sound management of plastics wastes on SIDS under the ISLANDS programme. UNEP has also developed the Mediterranean Pollution Hot Spot Programme. Major investments to improve infrastructure in this sector are foreseen from the EBRD and the European Investment Bank.

7. With funding from the Government of Japan, UNEP has conducted a needs assessment of environmentally sound technologies of plastic waste management and created an inventory of available technologies. This will be made available for stakeholders and policymakers in order to match the best technology and their needs.

8. In collaboration with the IGES Centre Collaborating with UNEP on Environmental Technologies (CCET), UNEP has developed a series of technical guidelines on intermediate municipal solid waste treatment technologies, including guidelines on [Waste-to-Energy Incineration](#), [Composting](#) and [Mechanical-Biological Treatment](#).

9. Funding from Norway and Sweden contributed to e-waste activities at national level for the development of two foresight reports ; one focuses on the [general e-waste stream and its projected increase up until 2050](#), and the other on [electric vehicles](#) and the increasing impact they have on waste management and resource extraction. These were both developed jointly with UNU.

10. The UNEP flagship report Global Waste Management Outlook 2 was developed in 2020 and will be available in spring 2021. It focuses on the interlinkage between chemicals and waste, options for implementation of actions to achieve the related Sustainable Development Goals, and strategies for increasing waste prevention, reduction, reuse, recycling and other types of waste recovery.

### **C. Assist Member States in the use of best available techniques and best environmental practices in solid waste management**

11. UNEP is continuously providing support and working with member states in developing and implementing innovative solid waste management solutions, strategies and technologies. Twenty-six national and local governments have used UNEP analysis or guidance in implementing waste prevention and sound management policies and good practices, in accordance with relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements, SAICM and other relevant international agreements.

12. UNEP has supported member states in adopting the circularity approach as one of the key pathways to address growing waste flows. UNEP has implemented two GEF projects with a focus on circular economy. The first GEF project on developing solutions to address marine plastics and plastic pollution has been concluded in 2019, with the [publication](#) of a set of recommendations and a global roadmap on circular economy of plastics. The second GEF project on developing circular economy approaches for the electronics sector is focusing on Nigeria and aimed at the development of an Extended Producer Responsibility policy and scheme for electronics to increase circularity in the electronics value chain.

13. The UNEP GEF Chemicals and Waste portfolio supports members states in a number of key areas linked to the Stockholm and Minamata conventions, as well as to SAICM's prioritized areas of work. This includes the elimination of chemicals of concern in the textiles sector in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan and Vietnam, the elimination of Lead in Paint in over 40 countries, and the improved management of chemicals used in consumer products. More work in the areas of better management of Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs) and reduction of impacts from Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals (EDCs) has also been developed and is pending submission for funding. This effort is linked to a major GEF investment in providing access to knowledge and data on best available techniques and best environmental practice via a knowledge management hub established with the SAICM Secretariat. This work has been done in close collaboration with other UN Agencies including FAO, WHO and UNIDO. Similar knowledge and best practice hubs have been established in collaboration with the BRS Secretariat and the Minamata Secretariat under the GEF GOLD programme on Artisanal Small-scale Gold Mining (ASGM). These efforts have been achieved in collaboration with UN Agencies and development partners including UNDP, UNIDO and Conservation International. A new multi-focal area project concept linking Chemicals and Waste with International Waters has been approved in 2020 for the Latin America and the Caribbean Region to minimize impacts from terrestrial sources of plastic wastes into the oceans.

### **D. Continue to foster the sharing of experience, lessons learned and success stories among Member States and key stakeholders through existing regional and global platforms**

14. Since 2018, UNEP has been collaborating with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (EMF) under the New Plastics Economy Global Commitment, which encourages business and governments to act on a clear set of 2025 targets to address plastic waste and pollution at its source. The actions proposed in the Global Commitment were co-designed by UNEP and EMF based on the sustainable consumption and production and systemic approach to address plastic pollution developed. The Global Commitment has united over 500 businesses, governments and relevant organizations. The 2020 annual [Global Commitment progress report](#) was released in November 2020, showing quantified progress made by signatories in the transition towards a circular economy for plastics.

15. Since UNEA-4, UNEP has collaborated with numerous civil society organizations. Examples include a partnership with the University Consortium for Sustainable Waste management in Latin America and the Caribbean, which implemented four regional certificate courses hosted by universities in Chile, Panama, and Trinidad and Tobago.

16. The report [Gender and waste nexus: Experiences from Bhutan, Mongolia and Nepal](#) was published in 2019 and UNEP's ongoing efforts on gender received special acknowledgment awarded by UN Women. It provides policy considerations for decision makers to create a more gender responsive waste management sector. In conjunction with the launch of the report, gender mainstreaming workshops were held in Bhutan, Mongolia and Nepal, targeting a wide range of stakeholders including national and local governments, the private sector, civil society organizations and community women. A video series called [Gender and Waste Nexus](#) was launched in celebration of International Women's Day in March 2020, targeting the wider public to mainstream gender in waste management.

17. UNEP launched the [UNEP Sustainability Action](#) in 2020, an international and multisectoral platform connecting UN organizations, governments, private sectors, academia and citizens to promote sustainability with a particular focus on environmental issues and resource efficiency. Multinational companies including 7&i Holdings (7-Eleven), Fast Retailing (UNIQLO) and Rakuten have already joined the platform.

18. In Latin America and the Caribbean, within the framework of existing networks and platforms such as the Intergovernmental Network on Chemicals and Waste, and the voluntary Coalition for the progressive closure of dumpsites, a number of information exchange activities, including webinars and study tours, were organized, where governments had the opportunity to exchange lessons learnt and best practices on Extended Producer Responsibility schemes, sound management of used-lead acid batteries, management of COVID-19 waste, and sanitary landfill operations.

**E. Coordinate with United Nations bodies, Member States and humanitarian agencies, as appropriate and feasible, to incorporate waste management into humanitarian recovery and response plans, with the aim of “building back better”**

19. At the on-set of the COVID-19 pandemic UNEP mobilized personnel to support member states in addressing the management of large increases of medical wastes produced in response to combatting the spread and treatment of the infection. Under the leadership of WHO, UNEP developed a series of [nine info-graphic fact sheets](#) aimed at highlighting the potential environmental impact from increased waste production in the health sector, and were translated into all official UN Languages plus Portuguese. The fact sheets were further supported by a series of global and regional webinars organized through the Green Growth Knowledge Partnership and the UNEP Regional Offices.

20. A report on [Waste Management during the COVID-19 Pandemic: from Response to Recovery](#) was also developed and includes emergency recovery and response plans, and how these can be implemented during the pandemic, as well as long term solutions with the aim of building back better. The report also has a section on gender to describe the potential impact of COVID-19 on gender in waste management and proposed actions to be taken.

**F. Assist countries, in particular developing countries and countries with economies in transition, in their efforts to strengthen and enhance national and local implementation of the environmentally sound management of waste through the regional waste management outlooks, improving information on environmentally sound technologies to integrate waste management**

21. UNEP- have provided successful and validated support for implementing waste prevention and sound management policies and good practices with 18 national and governments : Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Bhutan, Cambodia, Dominica Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Honduras, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, St Lucia, St. Kitts and Navis, Tanzania and Uruguay. Additionally, activities are still underway in Burkina Faso, Egypt, India, Iraq, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Morocco, Niger, Pakistan, Philippines, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Togo.

22. With funding from International Climate Initiative (IKI) of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Germany, UNEP have supported Bhutan, Mongolia and Nepal since 2017 in developing policies and practices for capacity building and sound management of waste. The work is being carried together with local partners, by means of a circular economy concept aimed at reducing greenhouse gases (GHGs) and short-lived climate pollutants (SLCPs) through improved waste management.

23. UNEP launched the [Waste Management Outlook for West Asia](#) on World Environment Day 2020. The outlook assesses current waste and environmental management legal and legislative systems in the twelve West Asian countries and highlights the potential of the circular economy, in which waste serves as a resource and as a driver of regional economic growth through multi-stakeholder involvement, creating a range of funding and investment opportunities. This is the seventh regional waste management outlook, adding to the ones on [Mountain Regions](#), [Asia](#), [Central Asia](#), [Africa](#), [Latin America and the Caribbean](#), and [SIDS](#).

## **II. Recommendations and suggested actions**

### **A. Lessons learned**

24. The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of building the resilience on essential services including waste collection and management. The pandemic has changed the waste composition in society, and municipal solid waste is potentially contaminated with infectious waste. UNEP will continue working with countries and cities to provide guidance and best practices for municipal level decision-makers, particularly in developing countries.

25. While gender inequalities and norms have been embedded in almost all aspects of waste management, mainstreaming gender in the waste sector could represent an opportunity to improve waste management in a more resilient and sustainable manner. This will require gender responsive policies and action plans as well as monitoring for compliance. UNEP, through its waste programme will continue working with countries to provide guidance and share practices for municipalities to establish a more gender-responsive waste management sector.

26. Circularity and circular economy approaches have become key in many regions, countries and businesses. This has led to growing efforts in the development of policies aimed at promoting circularity: such policies have high potential to minimizing waste, preventing chemicals of concern from source, and sustainably managing our natural resources.

### **B. Recommendations / suggested actions for UNEA-5**

27. The Assembly may wish to call for intensified efforts to meet growing demands around the waste management agenda which has accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic and to encourage a fundamental paradigm shift from end-of-life waste management to upstream waste prevention and reduction. UNEP, and especially IETC can play a central role in continuing to leverage partnerships and lead technological expertise on environmentally sound waste management and contribute to the achievement of related SDGs.

28. The Assembly may wish to invite member states to accelerate actions leading to the eradication of unsound waste management practices, including reduction of open burning of waste, and the identification and the safe closure of open dumpsites.

29. The Assembly may wish to encourage UNEP together with member states to support standardized reporting and data collection on waste quantities and treatment at national level, as well as the transboundary movement of waste, in line with relevant multilateral environmental agreements and the SDG indicators. By having reliable data efforts can more efficiently be direct to where they are most needed.