

QUARTERLY REPORT
to the 152nd Meeting of the
COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES



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1. SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS

COVID-19 RESPONSE

With the ongoing global pandemic, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has continued to respond using the four building blocks of its strategy (outlined below)¹. This includes supporting science for greater understanding of zoonotic diseases as well as providing knowledge and guidance to Member States at the regional and national levels. COVID-19 has affected some project implementation with partners, particularly of ongoing Global Environment Fund (GEF) projects, which UNEP is working to mitigate. Nonetheless, with alternate working modalities in place in some duty stations, UNEP continues to operate and deliver on its mandate.

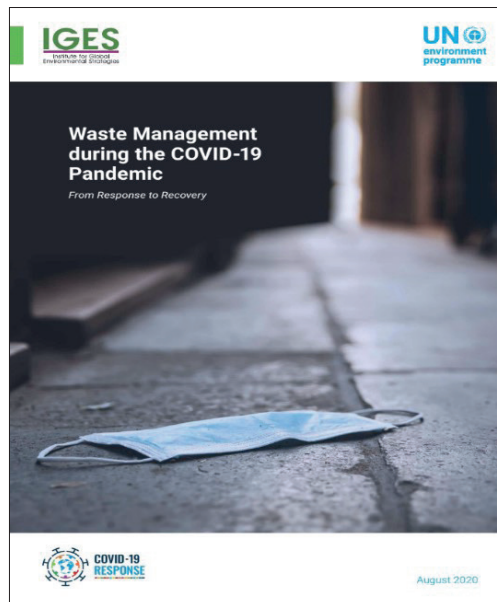
The four building blocks that form UNEP'S COVID-19 response are:

1. **The medical and humanitarian emergency phase**

On 13 August 2020, UNEP published a report on *Waste Management during the COVID-19 Pandemic: From Response to Recovery*,² with practical information and guidelines on health care and municipal solid waste management. As part of its work on COVID-19 response, UNEP supported training on medical waste management, providing technical advice to Afghanistan, Haiti, South Sudan and Sudan, as well as to United Nations peacekeeping operations.

2. **A transformational change for nature and people**

On 6 July 2020, UNEP, in conjunction with the International Livestock Research Institute and partners, released *Preventing the Next Pandemic – Zoonotic Diseases and How to Break the Chain of Transmission*.³ The report presented a clear and unambiguous call for a “One Health” approach that integrates human, animal and environmental health. While the “One Health” concept is not new, it has been sporadically adopted, and



institutional support for it has been limited. However, investing in such an approach will cost only a fraction of the stimulus packages announced to reboot the global economy. Widely reported by the media, findings from this report were published in more than 400 outlets in 42 countries.

3. **Investing to build back better**

On 17 September 2020, the Partnership for Action on Green Economy launched the “Learning for a Green Recovery” campaign, a global e-learning series to inform and shape the public policy debate around green economic reform and support countries in planning their COVID-19 responses. Through a series of webinars⁴, UNEP is supporting the use of National Adaptation Plans to help countries build back better, with Ghana⁵ serving as a prime example. That same month, UNEP and the African Development Bank hosted a webinar on building back better after COVID-19: “Moving towards a more sustainable and inclusive fashion industry on the continent”, with a panel of designers and fashion experts.⁶

4. **Modernizing global environmental governance**

UNEP supported the first virtual ministerial meeting⁷ on COVID-19 and the environment in West Asia in August 2020. The meeting brought together Ministers of the Environment from the region and adopted a ministerial statement⁸ that highlighted the importance of UNEP's COVID-19 response and green recovery.

GLOBAL

United Nations Summit on Biodiversity

Biodiversity took centre stage on 30 September 2020 at the seventy-fifth session of United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) as the President convened the United Nations Summit on Biodiversity under the theme of “urgent action on biodiversity for sustainable development”. More than 100 Heads of State and Government and other senior officials discussed biodiversity, conservation, monitoring and accountability. Recognizing that the continued deterioration and degradation of the world's natural ecosystems were having major impacts on the lives and livelihoods of people everywhere, world leaders called for increased resolve to protect biodiversity. The Summit⁹ demonstrated strong commitment to and highlighted the need for urgent action at the highest levels to support the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. This contributes to implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and places the global community on a path towards achievement of the goal of the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity: “living in harmony with nature”.

In the lead-up to the Summit, the President of the UNGA, UNEP, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and United Nations Secretariat launched the social media campaign #ForNature, to create momentum around the event -- highlighting commitments, pledges, and actions to preserve biodiversity and nature. With UNEP's support for #Playing4thePlanet,¹⁰ the video gaming industry showcased actions taken around the issues of nature and biodiversity in games.

The “Nature for Life Hub” was a venue for virtual events hosted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNEP and CBD that took place from 24 to 29 September 2020. Each day focused on specific thematic journeys: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); business and finance; global ambition; and local action; which fed into the United Nations biodiversity discussions.

Ministerial Roundtable Dialogue on Biodiversity Beyond 2020

On 24 September 2020, a ministerial round table on “Biodiversity Beyond 2020: Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth” deliberated on the road to Kunming and building ambition towards a post-2020 global biodiversity framework. The Executive Director called on countries to increase their ambitions and act now, especially amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Representatives welcomed the efforts and leadership of the People's Republic of China in preparing for the Fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 15) and expressed their willingness to work with China to establish an open, transparent process driver for the Convention.

Global Biodiversity Outlook 5

On 15 September 2020, UNEP supported the launch of the Global Biodiversity Outlook 5, published by the CBD. The Outlook, which reports that none of the Aichi Targets will be met, outlined eight major transitions needed to slow, then halt, nature's accelerating decline.

Global Fund for Coral Reefs

The Global Fund for Coral Reefs¹¹ was launched on 16 September 2020 at a high-level event in the margins of the seventy-fifth session of the UNGA¹². The Fund is coordinated by the United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office and co-developed by UNEP, UNDP, the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation and the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation. It will support businesses and finance mechanisms that improve the health and sustainability of coral reefs and associated ecosystems. The Fund will serve as a blended finance vehicle leveraging grants, debt and other financial instruments to facilitate private return-based investments for coral reef conservation and resilience.



Photo credit: Coral Reef Image Bank/Jett Britnell

High-Level Political Forum 2020

The High-Level Political Forum 2020¹³ (HLPF), held from 7–16 July, emphasized that decisive actions are needed to achieve the SDGs. There was also a strong call for recovery, setting us on a path to achieve the 2030 Agenda by fighting climate change and protecting biodiversity. UNEP organized, co-organized or participated in several special events and side events on marine litter, water management, the green economy, biodiversity and nature-based solutions and the HLPF thematic session on building back better with a special focus on the SDG environmental targets with a deadline of 2020. The President of the UNEA presented the main messages of the Assembly to the HLPF – the only representative of an intergovernmental forum with a dedicated segment at the HLPF.

Faith action

Interfaith parallel sessions held during the HLPF focused on climate action¹⁴, communal environment policy¹⁵ and decreasing the opportunity gap¹⁶. The *Faith Action on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Progress and Outlook* report¹⁷ and *Guidelines on Green Houses of Worship*¹⁸ publications were also launched during the reporting period.



Photo credit: [unsplash.com/John Weinhardt](https://unsplash.com/photos/JohnWeinhardt)

SDG moment

During the first SDG Moment and the SDG Action Zone in September, UNDP, UNEP and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) showcased interventions to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The joint presentation focused on an integrated approach to poverty and inequality, climate change and a healthy planet, and gender equality. The heads of the three organizations also participated in a panel discussion during the SDG Action Zone.

Mineral resource governance

The Global Industry Standard on Tailings Management (the Standard), launched on 5 August 2020, is the first global standard of its kind. The Standard was developed through an independent process – the Global Tailings Review – which was co-convened in March 2019 by UNEP, Principles for Responsible Investment and the International Council on Mining and Metals following the tragic tailings facility collapse at Brumadinho, Brazil in January 2019. It covers the entire tailings facility lifecycle, from site selection, design and construction, through management and monitoring, to closure and post-closure.

International Day of Clean Air for blue skies

On 7 September 2020, the global community celebrated the first International Day of Clean Air for blue skies¹⁹. UNEP led the global commemoration under the leadership of the Republic of Korea. UNEP's Executive Director hosted a Planet Unplugged event with Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO), to discuss a move to a pollution-free planet. UNEP launched the "Clear the Air" campaign in the run-up to the International Day. A website²⁰ in all United Nations languages featured 61 events organized by UNEP, its partners and Member States. A total of 590 articles covered the celebrations. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP) and UNEP held a regional conversation on air pollution on 8 September 2020 that emphasized accelerated decarbonization to achieve better air quality.

International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste

Another first was the International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste, celebrated on 29 September 2020. The UNEP web

page²¹ was linked to the Food and Agriculture Organization web page to create a joint platform. To raise awareness on food waste and its environmental impact, a social media campaign – #KitchenMemories²² – was launched that ran until World Food Day on 16 October. Chef and food system activist, Massimo Bottura, was appointed by UNEP as a Goodwill Ambassador to educate people on food waste and its impact on climate and biodiversity.

AFRICA

The Flipflop Expedition

On 22 September 2020, the Flipflop Expedition²³ (featuring the world's first entirely recycled plastic sailing boat) was launched by the Government of Kenya and will sail around Lake Victoria in early 2021. The expedition aims to raise awareness on pollution, which affects fresh water ecosystems, and its impacts on human health. This initiative is supported by Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, UNEP, the Museum for the United Nations (UN Live), the French Development Agency, and private sector entities.

Meeting of the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties to the Bamako Convention

Chaired by HE Ms Arlette Soudan-Nonault, President of the Conference of the Parties, the Meeting of the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties to the **Bamako Convention**²⁴ was held virtually on 10 September 2020. It took stock of the **third Conference of the Parties to the Bamako Convention**,²⁵ and discussed the strategic, technical, institutional and financial matters relating to the implementation of the Convention, as well as implementation of the decisions of the third Conference of the Parties. The meeting also took note of emerging hazardous waste associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Other areas covered included the consideration of an action programme and road map for the Bureau.

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Parliamentary Roundtable on Climate Change

Parliamentarians from South Asia and Africa discussed pathways to achieve affordable

renewable energy to address climate change at a round table organized by the Climate Parliament and the Energy and Economic Growth research programme on 28 July 2020. The Deputy Executive Director highlighted the important role of legislators in setting up renewable energy targets and strengthening existing policy and regulatory frameworks.

EUROPE

Climate change, biodiversity and sustainable development

On 6 July, the European Parliament Intergroup on Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development organized "A circular economy at the heart of climate action: how materials connect the dots in the EU Green Deal". This online event highlighted the need to address climate policies together with the circular economy, as a concerted strategy for building climate-neutral and resource-efficient economies. UNEP participated in the event and stressed that material efficiency offers untapped ready-to-implement mitigation solutions, highlighting significant opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with residential buildings and passenger cars. It shared the findings from the International Resource Panel report on resource efficiency and climate change.²⁶

The Intergroup hosted another online event on 9 September 2020, addressing methane emissions from oil and gas to help the world reach the Paris Agreement targets. UNEP outlined its role²⁷ in addressing methane emissions and highlighted the Mineral Methane initiative²⁸ under the Climate & Clean Air Coalition. The initiative seeks to promote significant reductions in methane and black carbon emissions from the oil and gas sector.

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

In August 2020, the Ibero-American Ministers of the Environment met at a conference in preparation for the Ibero-American Conference of Heads of State and Governments.²⁹ Twenty-two ministers approved a High-level Declaration to advance regional environmental priorities, considering those agreed at the Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, the Secretariat for which UNEP provides.

NORTH AMERICA

The World Circular Economy Forum Online took place in September 2020. It included a substantive session on challenges facing North America in the journey to circularity. UNEP played an important role in shaping and co-organizing the North America plenary session at the World Circular Economy Forum Online, in close collaboration with the Government of Canada. UNEP was also a partner and active participant in the event at which the Executive Director delivered two keynote addresses.

The announcement by Canada on single-use plastic was aligned with the ambition of the Forum: to influence decision makers and business leaders to take action on circularity.

WEST ASIA

On 18 August 2020, UNEP and Bahrain co-convened the first West Asia Ministerial Meeting on COVID-19 and the Environment. Ministers highlighted the triple planetary crises, linkages between nature and zoonotic diseases such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and the opportunity to build back better and greener.

Saudi Arabia, which holds the current G20 presidency, spearheaded two initiatives on land restoration/habitat loss and coral reefs with UNEP's contribution. UNEP delivered a statement to the G20 ministers encouraging the adoption of ambitious commitments towards ecosystem restoration and greener recovery.

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2. PROGRAMME OF WORK IMPLEMENTATION

2.1 CLIMATE CHANGE³⁰

2.1.1 Key highlights

Sustainable Development Goals Awards

In July 2020, the Climate & Clean Air Coalition and Corporación Empresarial Ambiental (CAEM) project “Mitigating black carbon and other pollutants from the bricks sector in Colombia” received the Sustainable Development Goals Award.³¹ The project mobilizes the sector towards implementation of a more sustainable production process.

Ecosystem-based adaptation

On 8 July 2020, *Plants, People, Planet*³² published a paper that captured lessons and outcomes from UNEP’s ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) South Project and promoted South-South cooperation. The project piloted restoration of mountains, desert and coastal ecosystems in Mauritania, Nepal, and the Seychelles.

Business case for sustainable land use

UNEP and the United Nations Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (UN-REDD) published a report to promote sustainable land use through sustainable coffee production in Vietnam on 2 July 2020.³³ In another joint endeavour with UN-REDD, UNEP held a regional webinar³⁴ on 9 September 2020 to launch the business case analysis for low-carbon technology in Costa Rica.³⁵

Asset decarbonization

Construction and Building Unions Superannuation (Cbus)³⁶, the David Rockefeller



Fund³⁷ and the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund³⁸ joined the United Nations-convened Net-Zero Asset Owner Alliance, bringing membership to 29 owners managing over \$5 trillion assets committed to aligning their portfolios with the 1.5°C scenario. The UNEP Finance Initiative hosts the Alliance, which aims to decarbonize assets worth \$200 billion by end of the biennium.

Short-lived climate pollutants

Togo’s Minister of Environment endorsed the first National Plan to Reduce Air Pollutants and Short-Lived Climate Pollutants in September 2020. The plan could lead to reduction of short-lived pollutants and GHGs by over 45 per cent.³⁹ Togo is one of the 12 countries supported by the Climate & Clean Air Coalition under the Supporting National Action and Planning on Short-Lived Climate Pollutants Initiative.

Media4Planet campaign

UNEP and Blue Life launched the first phase of the “Media4Planet” campaign on 14 September 2020. The campaign is an innovative media





Black carbon measurements being taken at a brick kiln in Colombia
(Photo credit: Corporación Ambiental Empresarial {CEAM})

model designed to shift mainstream public opinion of climate action from neutral to positive. Bringing together some of the biggest media owners and advertisers, the campaign allows companies to direct part of their paid media advertising through the model and convert profit margin into a funding source for climate-related projects. UNEP has secured over 2 million euros of TV advertising space and will reach nearly 30 million adults aged between 35 and 59, and 68 million adults in total, with a new TV spot.

2.1.2 Main opportunities, challenges and responses

National Adaptation Plans can be used to help countries build back better as part of the post-COVID-19 response. UNEP is seizing this opportunity through its webinar series⁴⁰ that shares knowledge and insights.

There is an opportunity to incentivize investments towards attainment of nationally determined contributions by non-State actors like youth, regional governments and businesses, who have an opportunity to create solutions and contribute to Paris Agreement goals.

2.2 RESILIENCE TO DISASTERS AND CONFLICTS

2.2.1 Key highlights

Disaster reduction

In July 2020, the Executive Director joined the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs in briefing⁴¹ the United Nations Security Council on the potentially catastrophic environmental consequences⁴² of a leak or explosion on the contested FSO SAFER, an oil tanker anchored 4.8 nautical miles off the Port of Ras Isa Marine Terminal, Yemen. The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, UNEP, the United Nations Office for Project Services and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) remain ready to act if access is secured to resolve the situation. Should a leak or explosion occur, this would have a devastating impact⁴³ on the health, economy and ecosystems of a country that after years of conflict is living through one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. UNEP has been supporting the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (PERSGA) and the International Maritime Organization in the development of the contingency and response



plan to enhance preparedness for an oil spill emergency.

Response and recovery

In August, UNEP supported the United Nations' response to two environmental emergencies:

- In Beirut, a member of the UNEP/OCHA Joint Environment Unit was deployed to coordinate responses to the environmental impact following the explosion of a large quantity of ammonium nitrate stored at the port in Beirut, including providing expertise on



Oil spill in Mauritius calls for more efforts to safeguard coral reef ecosystems
(Photo credit: Mauritius Wildlife Foundation)



hazardous debris and waste handling and medical waste treatment.

- In Mauritius, oil from the grounding of the bulk carrier MV Wakashio on a coral reef off the south-eastern coast of Mauritius had the potential to cause devastating and widespread impacts ⁴⁴ on the country. United Nations support for government-led response efforts included the deployment of an oil spill expert mobilized by the UNEP/OCHA Joint Environment Unit.

2.2.2 Main opportunities, challenges and responses

UNEP is reviewing its work in disaster- and conflict-affected States, drawing from the conclusions of an independent external review of its engagement in this area undertaken by the Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum of the Social Science Research Council. This review is looking at how internal structural arrangements can best deliver on existing mandates.

2.3 HEALTHY AND PRODUCTIVE ECOSYSTEMS

2.3.1 Key highlights

Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP)

A new project titled “Development of a Near Real-Time Monitoring System for Marine Coastal Eutrophication Using Google Earth Engine” was submitted to the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) and approved. It is currently being implemented.⁴⁵ The GEO and Google Earth Engine hailed it as a winning project in July 2020.⁴⁶ It is among 32 projects from 22 countries to address some of the biggest global challenges using open Google Earth data.

Ecosystem service accounts

In July 2020, as part of a European Union-supported project on natural capital accounting, South Africa launched pilot ecosystem service accounts for KwaZulu-Natal in a report commissioned by UNEP in partnership with Statistics South Africa, the Department of Environmental, Forestry and Fisheries and the South African National Biodiversity Institute. And in South America, Brazil launched the biome extent accounts⁴⁷ from 2000 to 2018, showcasing the change in land cover and land use in the different Brazilian biomes.

Regional seas

In August, the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia and the National University of Singapore launched an online catalogue⁴⁸ of marine litter policy frameworks and a database⁴⁹ on marine litter research⁵⁰ based on a review of nearly 400 scientific publications on marine plastic pollution in Association of Southeast Asian Nations Plus Three (ASEAN)+3 countries. These activities provide a foundation for regional knowledge management and networking to catalyse collaborative research.⁵¹



Global Peatlands Initiative

The Global Peatlands Initiative was highlighted as a standout contribution to advancing SDG 15: Life on Land across the United Nations system, as an innovative initiative that has led to the cross-country transfer of knowledge and experience between countries of the South for overcoming common challenges and for their mutual benefits in the 2020 collection of *Good Practices in South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Development – Volume 3*.⁵² The UNEP-led Initiative seeks to develop and adopt new approaches to the conservation, restoration and sustainable management of peatlands, linking science to practice and policymaking with targeted support to the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia and Peru.

UNEP Wild For Life – Peatlands Journey

The Wild for Life interactive Peatlands Journey⁵³ was launched on 30 September 2020. The interactive map, which is available in nine languages, allows audiences to discover 11 ancient peatlands across the planet and learn how they serve human well-being. Several communications products⁵⁴ were produced to support the launch.



Glowing Glowing Gone

UNEP, the Ocean Agency and Adobe launched the #GlowingGone campaign on 20 August 2020. Users can download a free Photoshop camera and bespoke underwater video filters. The collaboration invites audiences to take a pledge powered by Adobe Sign to support greater ocean protection and climate action. Celebrities with a reach of over 100 million joined the campaign, which garnered 184,500 downloads in its first week.

2.3.2 Main opportunities, challenges, and responses

The virtual seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly culminated in the United Nations Summit on Biodiversity^{55 56} on 30

September 2020. More than 100 Heads of State, Governments and other senior officials spoke on the topics of biodiversity, conservation, monitoring and accountability. The challenge now is to translate this momentum into a stronger post-2020 global biodiversity framework with commitment to implementation actions at all levels.

COVID-19 has affected the project implementation of at least 80 per cent of the ongoing Global Environment Facility (GEF)-supported projects in the portfolio, and has also affected new project identification and development. All project evaluations are currently conducted online without field visits and on-site reviews.

2.4 ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE⁵⁷

2.4.1 Key highlights

General Assembly resolution 73/333

Under UNGA resolution 73/333, the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) has to prepare a Political Declaration for a United Nations high-level meeting at its fifth session in February 2021, in the context of the commemoration of the creation of UNEP by the 1972 Stockholm Conference, “with a view to strengthening the implementation of international environmental law and international environmental governance, in line with paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development entitled “The future we want””. The first informal substantive consultation meeting on UNGA resolution 73/333 was held virtually from 21 to 22 July 2020 to initiate discussions on the draft Political Declaration. Member States provided valuable inputs for the building blocks of a Political Declaration to be initially discussed at a second consultation.

UNEP, in collaboration with United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Wildlife Asia, is supporting judicial capacity-building through the development of an introductory judicial curriculum on environmental law with the Judicial Training Institute (JTI) of Thailand. On 2 September 2020, an inaugural launch event was hosted at the JTI and the first unit was presented by the partners.⁵⁸

National legislation

Two workshops were held in West Asia on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). The first workshop, held on 21 July 2020, discussed national legislation and support to countries⁵⁹ in CITES implementation. The second, which focused on e-permitting systems, took place on 30 September. A regional consultation meeting was held for Montevideo focal points on 28 September, to discuss the outcomes of



Environmental governance

the global assessment on national air pollution legislation.

Human rights

In the Asia and the Pacific region, UNEP supported the following:

1. Human rights and gender equality stock take survey
2. Webinar on challenges and the way forward in the protection of the rights of environmental defenders
3. A joint UNICEF-UNEP-Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Expert Group Meeting to draft 37 guiding principles for children’s right to a safe, clean and healthy sustainable environment



2.5 CHEMICALS, WASTE AND AIR QUALITY

2.5.1 Key highlights

Supported by its UNEP Secretariat, the Bureau of the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM5) decided at its eleventh meeting to maintain the momentum in support of completing the intersessional task. ICCM5 will prepare recommendations for the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020, including consideration of the need to develop measurable objectives in support of the 2030 Agenda⁶⁰. The Bureau agreed to establish four Virtual Working Groups to advance the work.⁶¹

A Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan⁶² for Negombo City, Sri Lanka, 2020–2030 was completed, establishing major challenges and policy directions to transition towards a resource-recycling, financially sustainable and environmentally sound waste management system.

UNEP's International Environmental Technology Centre, along with the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, released a guide on composting as a strategy for improving waste management at the local level.⁶³ The guidelines are part of a series that assists decision makers and policymakers at the local level, with limited technical background on composting, to evaluate the feasibility of introducing composting projects as an



Chemicals, Waste and Air Quality

appropriate strategic option for improving waste management.

Air quality

UNEP developed an *Air Pollutant Emission Inventory Guidebook*, which also discusses dispersion modelling, for the Gulf Cooperation Council countries. This guidebook facilitates harmonized compilation of anthropogenic and biogenic emissions by Member States and the region. Emission inventories are considered the basis for the design of control strategies to abate air pollution.

Kigali Amendment

On 2 July 2020,⁶⁴ Liberia became the 100th nation to ratify the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. This provides a major boost to climate action to reduce the use of climate-warming hydrofluorocarbons.

2.5.2 Main opportunities, challenges and responses

As COVID-19 restrictions remain in place, some in-country support activities have been delayed, considerably limiting our work to what can be done remotely. Activities such as primary data collection and visiting project locations have been put on hold. Others have been fast-tracked to respond to COVID-19, such as the development of the report on *Waste Management during the COVID-19 Pandemic: From Response to Recovery*, to support countries in their efforts to deal with the influx of medical waste and potentially infectious waste resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.6 RESOURCE EFFICIENCY

2.6.1 Key highlights

Mainstreaming SDG 12

UNEP supported China, India, Pakistan and Viet Nam on SDG 12, the circular economy and sustainable consumption and production under the SWITCH-Asia project funded by the European Commission. This included support provided at the regional level via the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production/One Planet “low-carbon lifestyle challenge” project in the form of a bootcamp and grants for start-ups and groundwork for ASEAN Member States on sustainable consumption and production under the Working Group on Environmental Education, garnering strong support from Indonesia and other ASEAN Member States.

Life cycle and environmental footprinting

UNEP organized a workshop of the Latin American and Caribbean Network of the Environmental Footprint of Coffee in September 2020 to present the draft Product Environmental Footprint Pilot Guidance with the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. There are more than 400 environmental labels in the world, and 80 leading reporting methods and initiatives for GHGs alone. The guidance is intended to provide a common tool for measuring performance and create a level playing field for competition based on environmental performance.

A regional workshop on Construction of National Life Cycle Databases in Latin America trained 39 public sector and academia participants. The aim was to use best practices to build the capacity of the participants while they are developing national databases in their countries.⁶⁵



Consumer information

Drawing from *Consumer Information Tools and Climate Change, Facilitating low-carbon choices in Tourism, Buildings and Food Systems – Guidance for Policy Makers and Business Leaders*, infographics, news articles and social media were released by UNEP between July and September 2020 to raise awareness among policymakers, business leaders and the public on how consumers can take low-carbon decisions.⁶⁶



2.6.2 Main opportunities, challenges and responses

It is vital that countries combine stimulus packages with actions to decarbonize and enable a green transition. UNEP has been part of various regional and subregional discussions and initiatives to incorporate environmental protection and climate change strategies within stimulus packages for economic recovery.



2.7 ENVIRONMENT UNDER REVIEW

2.7.1 Key highlights

Measuring the circular economy

UNEP co-authored the *In-depth review of Measuring the Circular Economy* for the Conference of European Statisticians, together with United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Eurostat, the European Environment Agency, Statistics Finland (Lead), the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, Statistics Canada, Statistics Netherlands, and the National Administrative Department of Statistics of Colombia. Its recommendations were to:

- Strengthen coordination and communication of the work of international organizations and their expert groups related to measuring circular economies
- Have a task force or expert group draft practical guidelines in close collaboration with UNSD and other relevant international organizations
- Provide platforms for experience- and knowledge-sharing, and for coordination of international organization activities

Building air quality monitoring and management capacity in Central Asia

UNEP has partnered with the MoveGreen Public Foundation and KyrgyzHydromet in Kyrgyzstan, and the Association of Practicing Ecologists and KazHydromet in Kazakhstan on a new project funded by the United States of America (US) to:

- Enhance the capacity of government agencies to monitor air quality through deployment of low-cost PM_{2.5} and other sensors



Environment under review

- Support improvements in air-quality regulatory structures to monitor air quality
- Increase awareness of air pollution, its causes and its consequences among decision makers and the public
- Enhance regional cooperation on tackling air pollution challenges between Central Asian countries, building upon synergies with regional cooperation activities promoted by the US Environmental Protection Agency and the Secretariat of the UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution

The Future of GEO process

The “Future of GEO” process, launched at the fourth session of the UNEA (UNEA-4) through UNEP/EA.4/RES.23⁶⁷, was initiated⁶⁸ through broad online consultations for Member States and stakeholders that started in September and closed on 9 October 2020.



ENDNOTES

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2.8 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

Gender

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and UNEP co-hosted a sub-Saharan Africa virtual workshop on integrating gender perspectives in national climate policies, plans, strategies and actions.⁶⁹ The workshop is part of a series of regional workshops organized by the UNFCCC under the five-year enhanced Lima work programme on gender and its gender action plan (Decision 3/CP.25)⁷⁰.

Environmental and social safeguards

A new safeguard screening tool, the Safeguard Risk Identification Form, was launched in July 2020. It is an important first step to avoiding or mitigating potential safeguard risks in UNEP projects to ensure compliance with the UNEP Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework, which was updated in January 2020. Related supporting and guiding materials, including a video on how to prepare the Safeguard Risk Identification Form, were uploaded to the UNEP intranet.

2.9 IMPLEMENTATION OF UNEA RESOLUTIONS – OUTSIDE PROGRAMMATIC UPDATES

UNEP/EA.4/Res.17: Promote gender equality, and the human rights and empowerment of women and girls in environmental governance

A community of practice meets every six weeks to review progress in the implementation of UNEP and OHCHR joint activities. The first issue⁷¹ of the joint bulletin, which aims to enhance awareness of the UNEP-OHCHR partnership and the implementation of its work, was released in September 2020.

UNEP/EA.4/Res.18: Poverty-environment nexus

The Poverty-Environment Action for Sustainable Development Goals initiative with partner governments⁷² integrated socioeconomic responses and recovery strategies in post-COVID-19 responses; prepared Voluntary National Reviews for SDGs; built capacity on national climate change financing frameworks; designed national land-use master plans; developed soil loss mitigation plans; instituted technical assistance programmes; and promoted gender-sensitive agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa.⁷³

UNEP/EA.4/Res.22: Implementation and follow-up of United Nations Environment Assembly resolutions

In July, UNEP organized a virtual session explaining the UNEA Monitoring and Reporting Portal. About 30 representatives from all regional and political groups participated. Feedback included requests to make information open to the public available on the portal; to provide greater clarity on Member States' voluntary reporting; to strengthen the links between resolutions and programme of work implementation and with multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and to create a calendar of events.

UNEP/EA.4/Decision 1: Programme of work and budget for the biennium 2020–2021

The draft UNEP Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) 2022–2025 and Programme of Work and Budget 2022–2023 were discussed at a subcommittee meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) on 14 July 2020 and at the 151st CPR meeting on 14 September. As part of the MTS development process, between August and September, UNEP held consultations with Major Groups and Stakeholders, including Children and Youth, Faith-Based Organizations, and the private sector, in the form of "Discovery" sessions.

3. RESOURCE AND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

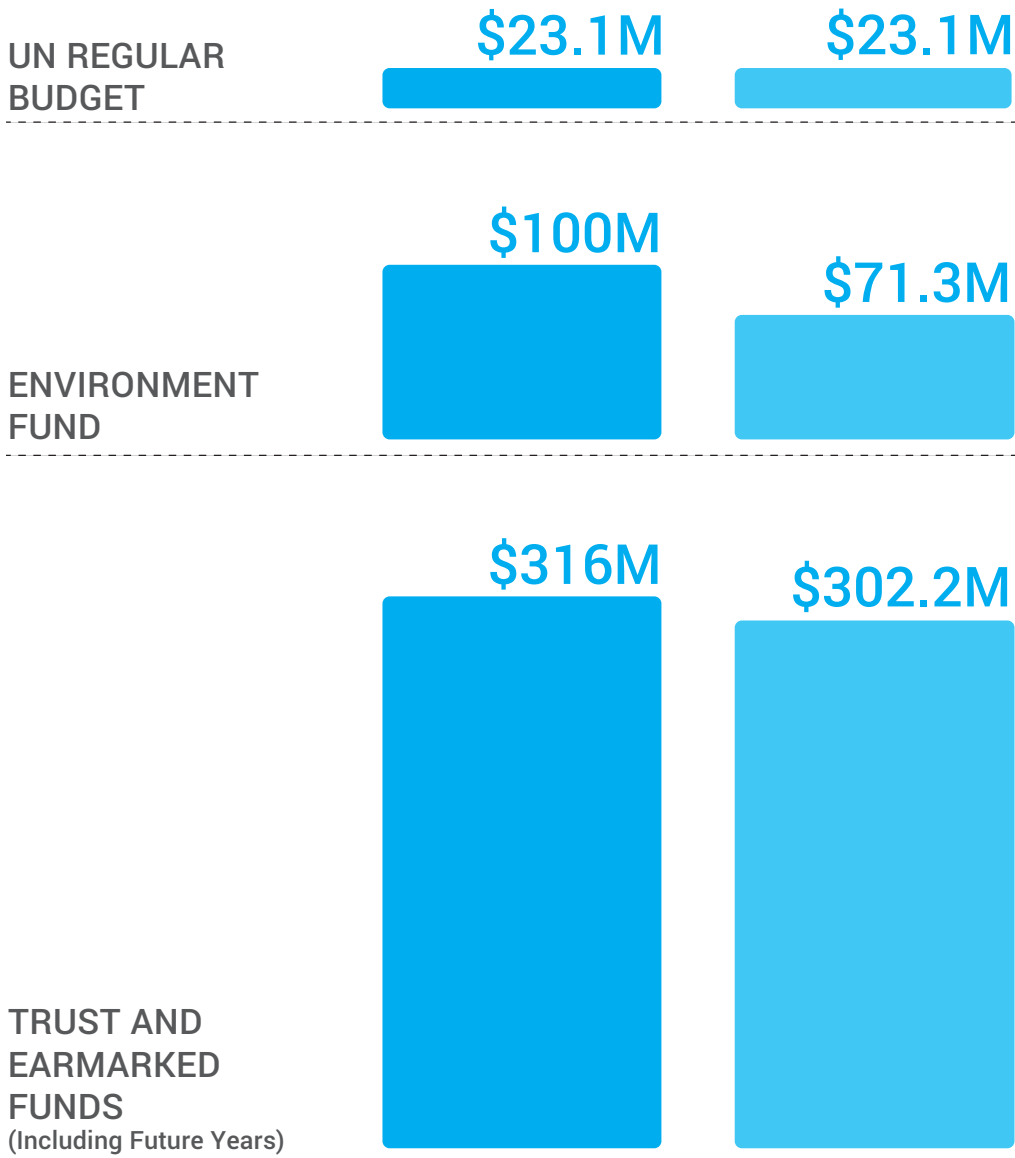
3.1 FINANCIAL UPDATE AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2020

Overview of income

By the end of the third quarter, as at 30 September 2020, the organization had received \$77.8 million of income, or 82 per cent, against the total annual budget of

\$458.1 million. The income comprises the annual funds of the United Nations Regular Budget and the Environment Fund, as well as earmarked contributions which include multi-year funding⁷⁴.

FIGURE 1 Budget and income January - September 2021



Core funding

The Environment Fund and the United Nations Regular Budget jointly form UNEP's core funding and enable UNEP to deliver on its core mandate.

Because the Regular Budget allocation for the whole year is received in advance, its share is proportionately higher by the end of the third quarter than it will be by the end of the year. However, due to the liquidity challenges facing the United Nations Secretariat, the approved Regular Budget for 2020 is only partially released. By the end of September 2020, only 25 per cent of the non-staff appropriation was allotted for spending. In addition, to manage the liquidity situation, Regular Budget vacant staff positions have been temporarily frozen.

The income received by the Environment Fund increased by 19 per cent compared with the same period last year, surpassing the total 2019 income, and amounted to 71 per cent of

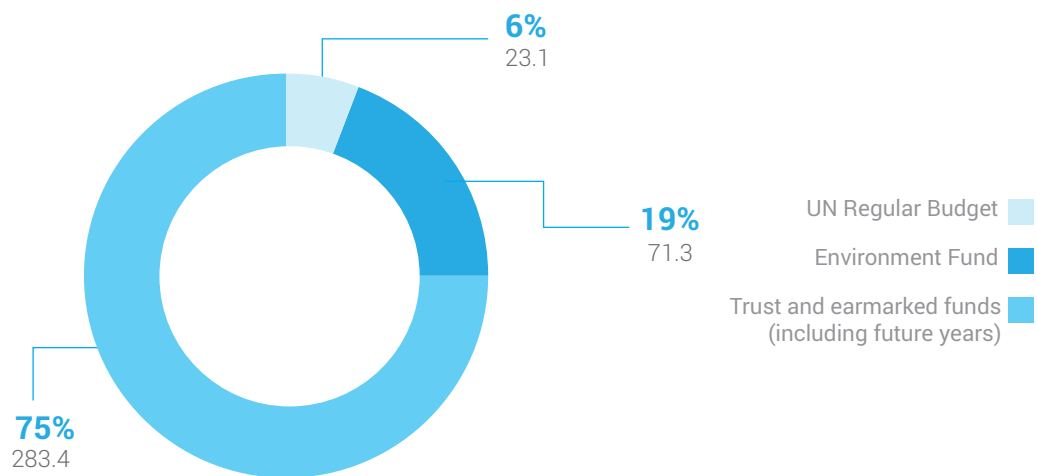
the approved 2020 budget. The Environment Fund remains critical to enable UNEP to lead on science-policy solutions; identify emerging environmental threats and innovate to address them; advocate and raise awareness; and build capacity. The Environment Fund also ensures robust oversight and accountability and supports UNEP's convening power in bringing together all stakeholders to advance the global environmental agenda.

Earmarked contributions

Earmarked contributions (including trust funds) enable the scaling-up and replication of results of core work, including capacity-building in more countries with more partners.

By 30 September 2020, the organization received \$283.4 million in earmarked funds, including trust funds, for the year 2020 (also including funds for future years), against a budgeted amount of \$316 million.

FIGURE 2 Income per source of funding (in \$ million) January–September 2020

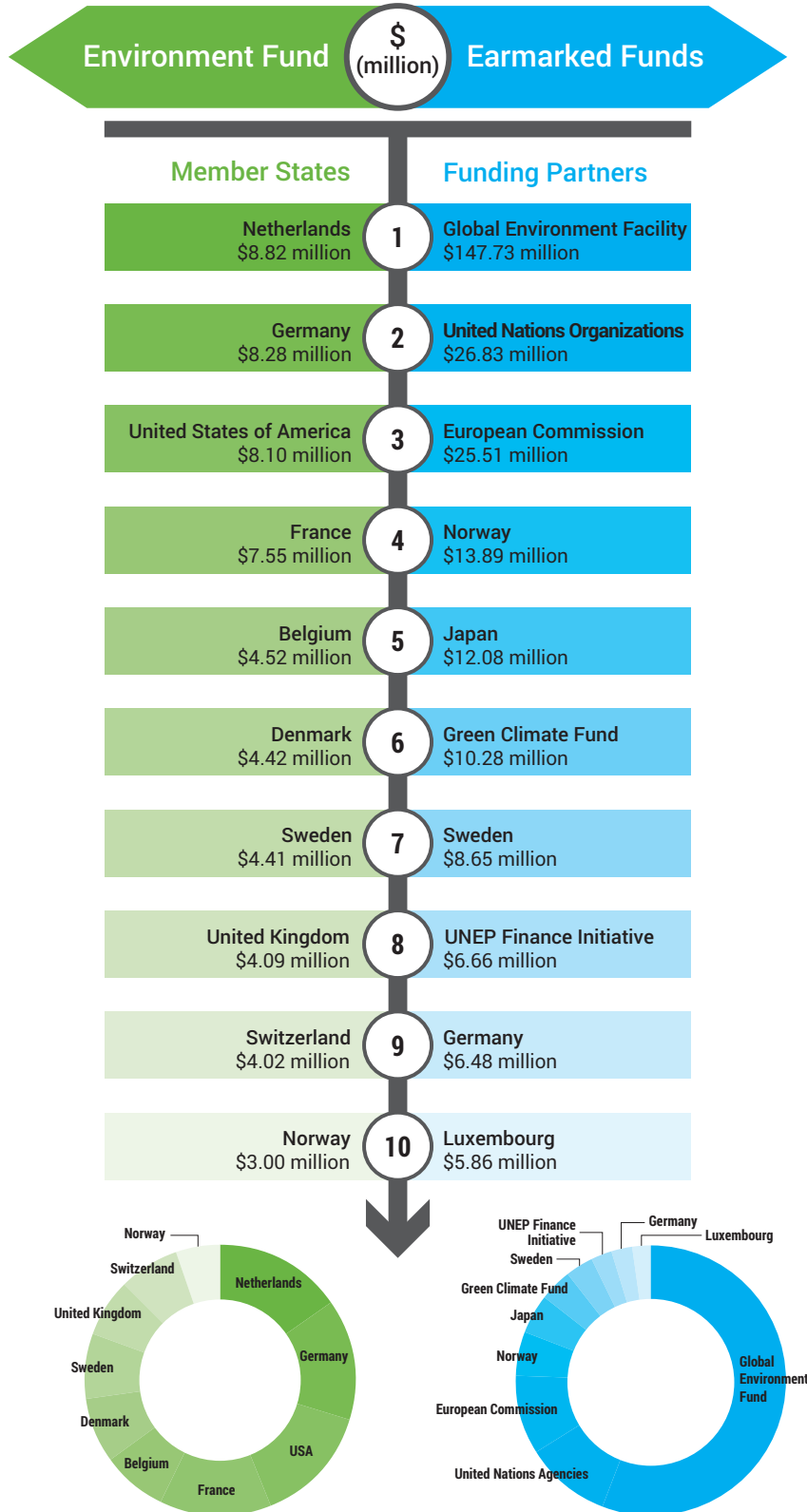


Funding partners

Sixty-three Member States have pledged to the Environment Fund, with 27 having

contributed their "fair share", as represented by the Voluntary Indicative Scale of Contributions (VISC). However, the number of Member States contributing is 10 per cent less than at

FIGURE 3 Top 10 contributors (\$ million) January-September 2020



the same time last year and represents only 33 per cent of the universal membership. To address this, the Secretariat has sent renewed invitations to Member States to contribute. UNEP has also urged all 193 Member States to honour the commitment made at the

United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development ("Rio+20"; para. 88b of the outcome document) to ensure secure, stable, adequate and increased financial resources for UNEP.

Member States that contributed their "fair share" as represented by the Voluntary Indicative Scale of Contributions (January 2020 – September 2020)

Andorra	Finland	Myanmar
Barbados	France	The Netherlands
Belgium	Georgia	Norway
Bhutan	Iceland	Saint Lucia
Brunei Darussalam	Latvia	Serbia
Cyprus	Liechtenstein	Slovenia
Denmark	Luxembourg	Solomon Island
Eritrea	Mauritius	Sri Lanka
Fiji	Montenegro	Switzerland

3.2 STATUS OF ALLOCATIONS AND EXPENDITURES AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2020

2020 core budgets – Programme of Work budget (\$)					
	Functional area name	Environment Fund	Overhead trust account	Regular Budget	Grand total
A	Policymaking Organs	2,000,000	10,000	8,500	2,018,500
B. 1	Executive Direction & Management	3,600,000	-	3,383,300	6,983,300
B. 2	United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects on Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR)	-	-	822,700	822,700
	Subtotal A + B	5,600,000	10,000	4,214,500	9,824,500
C	Programme of Work				
1.	Climate change	11,100,000	3,600,000	2,267,800	16,967,800
2.	Resilience to disasters and conflicts	7,800,000	500,000	1,543,500	9,843,500
3.	Healthy and productive ecosystems	14,000,000	1,050,000	2,649,600	17,699,600
4.	Environmental governance	13,100,000	1,050,000	4,547,000	18,697,000
5.	Chemicals, waste and air quality	11,700,000	1,500,000	1,809,200	15,009,200
6.	Resource efficiency	14,200,000	1,500,000	1,979,500	17,679,500
7.	Environment under review	11,500,000	200,000	3,136,500	14,836,500
	Subtotal C	83,400,000	9,400,000	17,933,100	110,733,100
D	Fund Programme Reserve	5,000,000			5,000,000
	Subtotal C + D	88,400,000	9,400,000	17,933,100	115,733,100
E	Programme Management and Other				
	Programme Support (UNEP Office for Operations; United Nations Office at Nairobi/ United Nations Office at Geneva bills; after-service health insurance provision)	6,000,000	9,590,000	1,214,600	16,804,600
	Subtotal E	6,000,000	9,590,000	1,214,600	16,804,600
	Total (A+B+C+D+E)	100,000,000	19,000,000	23,362,200	142,362,200

2020 core budgets – Allocations as at 30 September 2020 (\$)

	Functional area name	Environment Fund	Overhead trust account	Regular Budget	Grand total
A	Polymaking Organs	1,907,198	-	413	1,907,611
B. 1	Executive Direction & Management	3,999,560	-	2,853,600	6,853,160
B. 2	United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects on Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR)	-	-	734,075	734,075
	Subtotal A + B	5,906,758		3,588,088	9,494,846
C	Programme of Work	-			
1.	Climate change	8,578,171	744,757	2,164,150	11,487,078
2.	Resilience to disasters and conflicts	5,867,315	691,702	1,464,600	8,023,617
3.	Healthy and productive ecosystems	10,955,510	1,189,191	2,032,978	14,177,679
4.	Environmental governance	10,644,031	980,987	4,413,244	16,038,262
5.	Chemicals, waste and air quality	8,971,426	525,685	1,489,498	10,986,609
6.	Resource efficiency	10,897,553	836,577	1,567,117	13,301,247
7.	Environment under review	8,785,400	137,176	2,737,552	11,660,128
	Subtotal C	64,699,406	5,106,075	15,869,139	85,674,620
D	Fund Programme Reserve	2,000,000	-	-	2,000,000
	Subtotal C + D	66,699,406	5,106,075	15,869,139	87,674,620
E	Programme Management and Other				
	Programme Support	5,393,836	12,549,808	1,203,084	19,146,728
	Subtotal E	5,393,836	12,549,808	1,203,084	19,146,728
	Total (A+B+C+D+E)	78,000,000	17,655,883	20,660,311	116,316,194

2020 core budgets – Expenditure as at 30 September 2020					
	Functional area name	Environment Fund	Overhead trust account	Regular Budget	Grand total
A	Polycymaking Organs	1,472,060	-		1,472,060
B. 1	Executive Direction & Management	2,553,046	-	2,203,135	4,756,181
B. 2	United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects on Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR)	-	-	563,379	563,379
	Subtotal A + B	4,025,106	-	2,766,514	6,791,620
C	Programme of Work				
1.	Climate change	7,354,962	284,109	1,707,707	9,346,778
2.	Resilience to disasters and conflicts	3,964,522	311,864	995,982	5,272,368
3.	Healthy and productive ecosystems	6,096,572	665,277	1,704,531	8,466,381
4.	Environmental governance	5,859,699	509,880	3,407,325	9,776,903
5.	Chemicals, waste and air quality	6,439,388	797,401	1,357,700	8,594,490
6.	Resource efficiency	6,595,814	659,603	1,289,881	8,545,298
7.	Environment under review	5,340,902	199,029	1,847,942	7,387,873
	Subtotal C	41,651,860	3,427,163	12,311,068	57,390,092
D	Fund Programme Reserve	805,496	-	-	805,496
	Subtotal C + D	42,457,356	3,427,163	12,311,068	58,195,588
E	Programme Management and Other				
	Programme Support	3,877,094	7,226,657	884,386	11,988,137
	Subtotal E	3,877,094	7,226,657	884,386	11,988,137
	Total (A+B+C+D+E)	50,359,556	10,653,820	15,961,968	76,975,345

3.3 RESOURCE MOBILIZATION STRATEGY

With reference to UNEP/EA.4/Decision 17⁵, the Secretariat continues discussions with Member States to address the key funding challenges identified. Key actions identified were presented to the Annual Subcommittee in the draft action plan for the implementation of paragraph 88 of the Rio+20 outcome document. The draft action plan was, among other things, informed by the results of the Online Survey on UNEP Funding, which was shared with Member States in July and which closed at the end of August. Eighty respondents from all regional groups participated in the survey, providing information that informed the development of the draft 2022–2023 Programme of Work and Budget, and will contribute to the revision of the resource mobilization strategy.

In the survey, reference to the VISC as each Member State's "fair share" of the Environment Fund budget was well received by Member States.

Out of the respondents, over 66 per cent said that using "fair share" rather than "VISC" made it easier to understand the concept and the tool. To give greater visibility to the funding challenges and the importance of core and flexible funding, the Secretariat is working on a communication and outreach campaign with the aim of increasing funding to the Environment Fund.

3.4 HUMAN RESOURCES OVERVIEW

General overview

As at 30 September 2020, UNEP employed 1,268 staff members: 751 (59 per cent) in the professional and higher categories, 7 (1 per cent) in the National Professional Officer (NPO) category and 510 (40 per cent) in the general service category. There are 777 (61 per cent) female and 491 (39 per cent) male staff members.

The table below shows the total staff members at grade P-5 and above as at 30 September 2020.

Senior-level staff for United Nations Environment Programme Secretariat and Multilateral Environment Agreements

Level	USG	ASG	D-2	D-1	P-5
No. of staff	1	3	8	53	142

Note: USG = Under-Secretary-General; ASG= Assistant Secretary-General; D = Director; P = Professional.

Senior appointments

The following senior staff appointments were made in the third quarter of 2020 (July to September).

Position title	Grade	Gender	Nationality	Division/Office
Principal Legal Officer	D-1	Male	South African	Law Division
Senior Programme Management Officer	P-5	Male	Namibian	Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity
Senior Programme Management Officer	P-5	Female	South African	Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity
Senior Programme Management Officer	P-5	Female	USA	Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

Gender parity status

The gender parity status in the first, second and third quarter of the year 2020 remains the same.

Secretariat												
Gender	USG	ASG	D-2	D-1	P-5	P-4	P-3	P-2	Total P+	NPO	GS	Grand total
Female	1	1	3	17	45	88	97	55	307	3	286	596
Male	0	1	1	28	64	100	62	22	278	4	103	385
Multilateral Environmental Agreements												
Female	0	1	2	4	14	29	27	12	89	0	92	181
Male	0	0	2	4	19	18	18	16	77	0	29	106
Total	1	3	8	53	142	235	204	105	751	7	510	1268

Note: USG = Under-Secretary-General; ASG = Assistant Secretary-General; D = Director; P = Professional; NPO = National Professional Officer; G = General Service.

Overall gender distribution

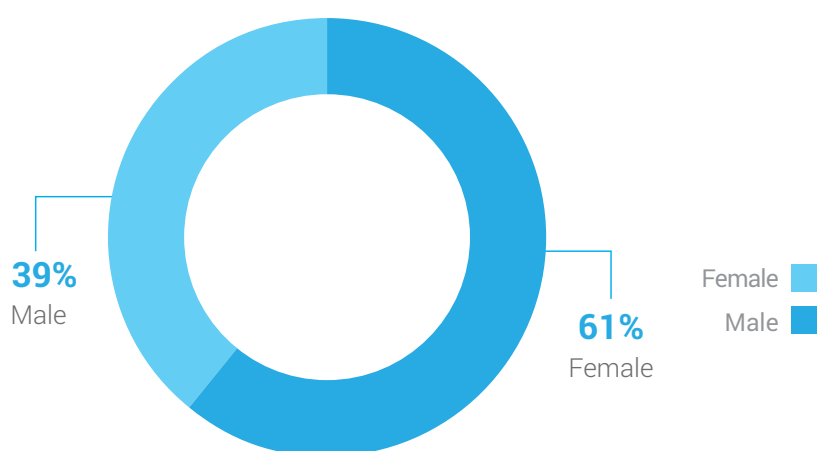
Gender status for P-5 and above for the United Nations Environment Programme Secretariat and Multilateral Environment Agreements as at 30 September 2020

Gender	USG	ASG	D-2	D-1	P-5	Total
Female	1	2	5	21	59	88
Male	0	1	3	32	83	119
Total	1	3	8	53	142	207
Female	100%	67%	62%	40%	42%	43%
Male	0%	33%	38%	60%	58%	57%

Note: USG = Under-Secretary-General; ASG = Assistant Secretary-General; D = Director; P = Professional.

Overall gender distribution

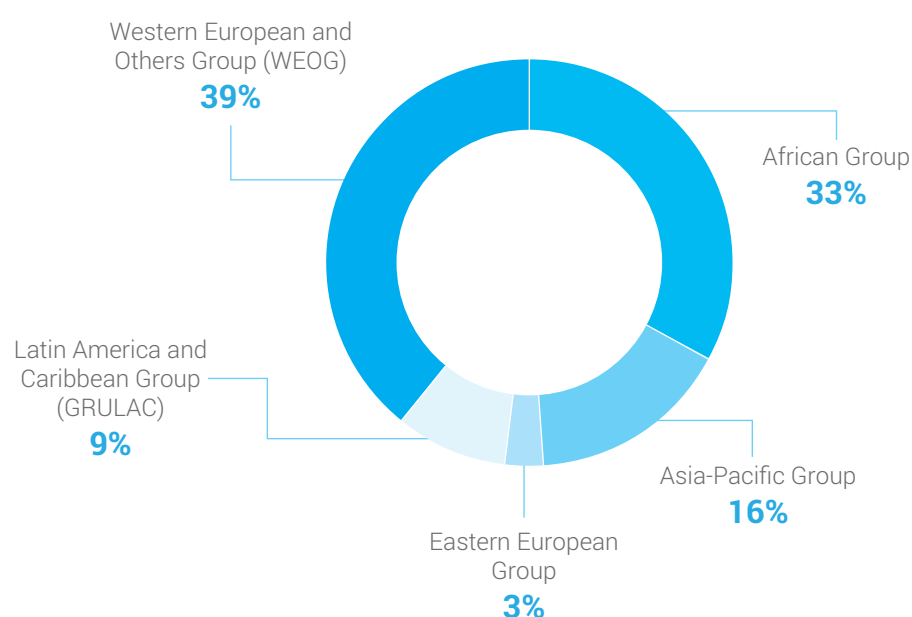
FIGURE 4 UNEP Gender Distribution



Regional representation of staff (United Nations Environment Programme Secretariat and Multilateral Environment Agreements) as at 30 September 2020

Region	Total
African Group	412
Asia-Pacific Group	209
Eastern European Group	38
Latin America and Caribbean Group (GRULAC)	109
Western European and Others Group (WEOG)	500
Grand Total	1,268

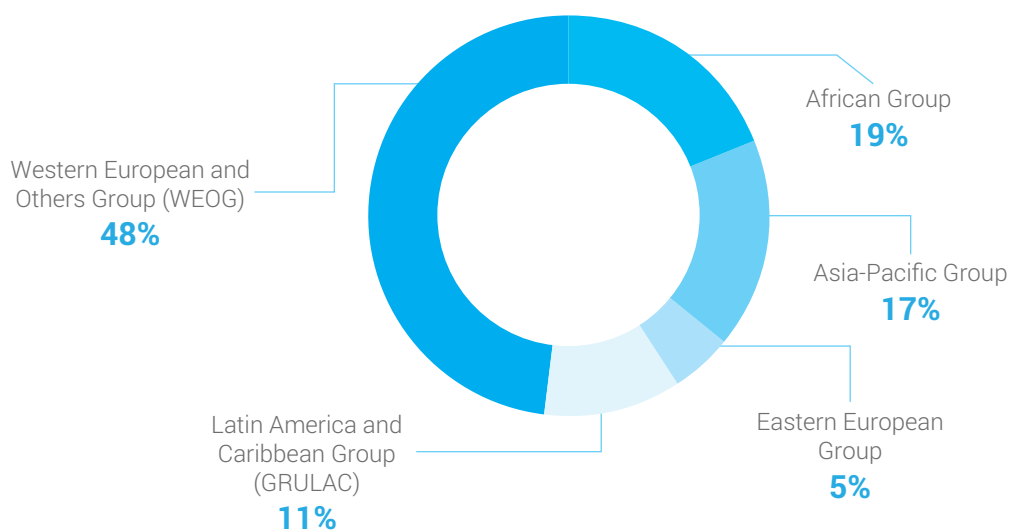
FIGURE 2 Regional Representation



Regional representation of staff members at grade P-5 and above (United Nations Environment Programme Secretariat and Multilateral Environment Agreements)

Region	Total
African Group	39
Asia-Pacific Group	36
Eastern European Group	10
Latin America and Caribbean Group (GRULAC)	23
Western European and Others Group (WEOG)	99
Total	207

FIGURE 2 Regional Representation



Key human resources risk and issues 3.5 EVALUATIONS

In relation to the Secretary-General's system-wide Strategy on Gender Parity and UNEP's Gender Parity Implementation Plan, UNEP's gender ratio remains at 61:39 female to male. Although measures have been put in place to assist the achievement of parity, the ratio at the P-5 and above level remains at 43:57 female to male. There is a need to further balance recruitment at the D-1 and P-5 levels and at the general service level to achieve parity. UNEP will make efforts to improve geographical distribution through concerted outreach efforts via regional forums and career development venues. It will explore enhancing dashboard reports and is committed to enhancing monitoring mechanisms to improve regional geographic distribution and representation of unrepresented and underrepresented countries.

During the reporting period:

- Four project evaluations were brought to completion
- Twenty-four project evaluations are currently ongoing

In the context of the current pandemic, evaluations continued as normal if they were deemed suitable for a fully desk-based approach or had completed their field mission/data-collection phases prior to COVID-19 travel restrictions.

Other project evaluations proceeded in a limited manner with only desk-based preparatory work being conducted before the evaluations were placed "on hold" prior to the initiation of their field mission/data-collection phases. The continuation of these evaluations awaits more favourable public health conditions.

ENDNOTES

- 71 United Nations Environment Programme and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *UN Environmental Rights Bulletin – September 2020 Edition (2020)*. Available at https://spark.adobe.com/page/djLcWfUOGI02P/?fbclid=IwAR2b-B1X-8alRITBg1qf-G0v7IGpeDe_3Kvshv3prX7KPoUvsY4T3j26yfl.
- 72 Poverty-Environment Action for Sustainable Development Goals initiative partner governments include Bangladesh, Indonesia, Laos PDR, Malawi, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Rwanda, South Africa and Tanzania.
- 73 See <https://pea4sdgs.org>.
- 74 Per the United Nations Secretariat interpretation and application of the International Public Service Accounting Standards (IPSAS), Umoja does not enable breakdown of this income into annual figures.
- 75 UNEP/EA.4/Decision 1: *Programme of work and budget for the biennium 2020–2021* encourages the Executive Director to implement the resource mobilization strategy in close consultation with the CPR.



QUARTERLY REPORT

to the **152nd** Meeting of the

COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES

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