

From: Inger Andersen
Sent: Friday, July 2, 2021 10:14AM
To: Broadcast-UNEP
Subject: My monthly letter – June 2021

Dear colleagues,

June was a sad month for the UNEP family. As many of our colleagues continued to struggle in the pandemic, we lost one of our finest. Shoa Ehsani truly embodied the spirit of UNEP. A person passionate about sustainability. A person who persevered to make UNEP, here in Nairobi and in our offices around the world, a better place. A person who believed that we must tread lightly and peacefully on the planet. And above all, a person who cared deeply for his family. My sincerest condolences to Tracy and their three young children. He will remain in our thoughts.

Reappointment of Secretary-General

This month, our Secretary-General, António Guterres, was [reappointed](#) to a second term by the General Assembly. Outlining his vision for a second term, the Secretary-General spoke of “making peace with nature” as an imperative for the next five years, noting that “our world faces a triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature loss, and pollution.” He made it crystal clear that the triple planetary crisis “is our number one existential threat. We need an urgent, all-out effort to turn things around.” And for anyone looking for validation of this argument, you do not need to look any further than the extreme heat waves we are witnessing. Over the last few days, parts of Canada [recorded](#) a temperature of nearly 50°C. Temperatures [on land](#) in the Arctic Circle in Siberia hit 48°C as the region along with Europe reals from heatwaves.

The challenge for us now is how to work with the Secretary-General and the rest of the UN System to spur far faster and deeper action than what we are currently seeing. And I believe that our new Medium-Term Strategy charts the path for UNEP to rise to the occasion. The next year is all about action, action and more action.

Celebrating the best at UNEP: the Kipepeo Awards

And if the submissions for the Kipepeo Awards are anything to go by – we are in great shape. I was amazed to read through the 55 impressive submissions, and I congratulate each and every team that was nominated. I am particularly pleased about this new initiative because it celebrates teamwork and that is the only way we will ever overcome the complex challenges of our time. In addition to the three categories – innovation, collaborative teams, and environmental impact – we made a special mention of two initiatives. Read more [here](#). My huge thanks to colleagues and panel members. This was a great opportunity to celebrate the UNEP community, which is passionate, committed, competent and technically skilled. Not a day goes past when I am not proud to work with you all.

You can watch the Kipepeo Awards Townhall [online](#).

World Environment Day and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration

June featured the outstanding launch of the [UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration](#) on [World Environment Day](#). Global host Pakistan was amongst the front-runners announcing a US \$500 million green bond and

a pledge to restore 1 million hectares of forest land. Papua New Guinea committed to passing a new Bill on Protected Areas by the end of the year. North Macedonia gazetted a new national park. Germany became the first country to contribute to the Decade's Multi-Partner Trust Fund. Social media posts were seen by more than 160 million people globally. More than 40,000 news stories in 174 countries brought home the importance of ecosystem restoration in 37 languages. In case you missed the official opening, which was viewed by nearly 300,000 people, you can catch it [here](#).

[Speaking](#) at the World Environment Day global event hosted by the government of Pakistan, I outlined [four key actions](#): We must get finance flowing. We must protect indigenous groups and local communities who manage the land. We must make cities green havens; and we must restore oceans and water bodies. In a [joint opinion](#) with Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, we made the point that land is our greatest ally this decade as we seek to undo the damage our species has wrought on nature and ourselves.

If [embraced globally](#), the next Decade on Ecosystem Restoration will be remembered as a historic turning point in how people engage with nature and tackle the environmental threats we face. The good news, as I [said](#) to France24, is that nature will bounce back if given half a chance. So, investing in ecosystem restoration is smart for the economy, for society and people. At the launch of the FAO-UNEP Global Assessment on Soil Pollution, [I spoke](#) about soil pollution and the role that the UN Decade can play in backing healthy and productive soils.

Huge thanks to Daniel Cooney, Dechen Tsering, Susan Gardner and Tim Christophersen, and colleagues in the Asia Pacific Office, Ecosystems Division, the UN Decade and Communications teams for this great effort.

The G7 Shared Agenda for Global Action to Build Back Better

Earlier this month, the 47th G7 Summit took place in Cornwall, an important stepping-stone in the lead-up to UNFCCC COP26, also to be hosted by the UK. The Head of State's [final Communiqué](#) includes some significant commitments, including a transition away from unabated coal capacity, but we still have some way to journey on the big, sticky issue – climate finance – which remains unresolved. [As mentioned](#) by UNFCCC Executive Secretary, there is a need for a “clearer signal on how and when we will be able to see the commitment to mobilise the \$100bn fulfilled”.

I was, however, very encouraged by the G7 2030 [Nature Compact](#) which provided a very strong and powerful endorsement of the environment and biodiversity agenda. The Compact commits to “halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030” and to an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework. Finally, in the [Carbis Bay Health Declaration](#), G7 members “champion an integrated and systems-based One Health approach across all aspects of pandemic prevention, preparedness, detection and response and work to foster a healthier planet”. This is very much a tribute to the work UNEP has been doing on the topic with other ‘Tripartite Plus’ partners OIE, FAO and WHO.

As the G7 cycle comes to a close, I would like to thank Nick Bertrand who has been coordinating and acting as Sherpa for the G7 and G20 processes and the many colleagues who have provided substantive inputs to both the UK G7 Presidency as well as the Italian G20 Presidency. You may be interested in the [briefing note on G7/G20 engagement](#) prepared for a recent SMT meeting.

Environmental catastrophes: Security Council on Yemen and oil leak in Sri Lanka

I [briefed](#) the Security Council on the situation with the FSO Safer, a floating single-hull storage and offloading vessel on the coast of Yemen. The risk of a massive oil leak poses a grave threat to the environment and to the livelihoods of millions of people. My sincere thanks to Muralee Thummarukudyil, Lizzie Sellwood, Sami Dimassi and Abdel-Majeid Haddad for the support they provided for the Security Council briefing.

As I write, an [environmental catastrophe](#) is unfolding in Sri Lanka where a few weeks ago, a fire engulfed the chemical and oil laden MV X-Press Pearl off the coast of Negombo. Large quantities of plastic nurdles released from the ship have beached on the Sri Lankan coast. The ship eventually sunk, along with some of its cargo and potentially its fuel oil. There were many other chemicals, including nitric acid, on board. It is unclear just how much of oil or chemicals are currently left in the ship and where the containers are. Again, we can be extremely proud of the UNEP team, under the led by Hassan Partow from the Disasters and Conflict Branch under the overall leadership of Muralee Thummarukudyil. Hassan and his colleagues arrived in Sri Lanka on 16 June at the request of the Government of Sri Lanka and have been providing invaluable support to the Marine Environment Protection Agency.

World Oceans Day: June 8

On World Oceans Day, I [called](#) for us to protect and restore our planet's biggest ecosystem – from source to sea – so that we might move towards a pollution-free and resilient ocean. This means ending land-based pollution; decarbonizing our economies; finalizing an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework; and addressing fisheries subsidies that over-exploit marine resources.

UN Food Systems Summit Dialogue on Nature-Positive Food Systems

Ahead of the UN Food Systems Summit, UNEP co-hosted with the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Agnes Kalibata, a [Global Food Systems Summit Dialogue](#) on Nature-positive Food Systems. Sustainable food systems are a matter of survival and I encouraged participants to think big. This means seeking transformations at community, country and global levels and ensuring that food systems are mainstreamed into the climate, biodiversity, and desertification conventions. My thanks to Susan Gardner, James Lomax and the Ecosystems and Economy Divisions for elevating the consideration of nature as a vital ingredient in our food systems.

Quick finance updates: pension, nature-related disclosures, and ethical finance

I was pleased to see the UN [announce](#) long overdue steps to decarbonize pension funds. The United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF) has announced new climate targets to reduce its investment-induced greenhouse gas emissions by 29 per cent in 2021 and to 40 per cent by 2025.

In the non-related [2021 Ethical Finance Summit](#), I reinforced the importance of banks, insurers and investors in driving change to a more ethical, purpose-driven approach to finance mobilization at the. Financiers should not wait to be forced to do the right thing. They need to lean in and lead – for the sake of their own long-term profitability as much as the planet. I [welcomed](#) the Taskforce on Nature-related financial disclosures (TFND), a key step in re-directing global financial flows to nature-positive sectors and activities. My sincere appreciation to Eric Usher and the UNEP FI team for their perseverance and support to the UNJSPF and the Taskforce.

Let's get rid of greenwashing: Global Compact Summit

At the [United Nations Global Compact Virtual Leaders' Summit](#), I [outlined](#) a 5- point reform agenda for business. Businesses must account for the value of nature. They must set science-based targets for nature

and hold suppliers and trading partners to higher standards. And all of this applies equally to investors, bankers, and insurers. This is no longer a Corporate Social Responsibility prerogative but must be embedded in the DNA of business. Finally, we need transparency and independent oversight to avoid greenwashing.

Desertification, land degradation and water stress

On the [International Day for Desertification](#) on June 18, I made the point that there are no profits to be made on a destroyed planet. Land degradation is [undermining](#) human well-being and pulling the rug from under our feet. Action requires systems shift that understand the pressures on land. A deeply concerning [new report](#) by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction focuses on a key factor behind land degradation – the water crisis - terming it “the next pandemic” if countries do not take urgent action on land and water management, and tackling the climate emergency.

UNSCEAR: Healthy people and planet

I [addressed](#) the sixty-eighth session of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR). UNSCEAR has a long history of protecting people and the environment through science, and UNEP is proud to administer the UNSCEAR General Trust Fund. My appreciation to Borislava Batandjieva-Metcalf, Executive Secretary and the team for the great work.

Joint Bureau Retreat

This past month we held the Joint Preparatory Retreat of the Bureaux of the UN Environment Assembly and of the Committee of Permanent Representatives. This was a useful opportunity for the two Bureaux to align on important milestones in 2021 and 2022. This included preparations for the resumed session of UNEA 5.2; discussions on the outcomes of the consultation on General Assembly resolution 73/333; and the road ahead for UNEP@50. I was pleased to welcome the new CPR Bureau and Chair Ambassador Luisa Frago of Portugal. I look forward to working closely with the new Bureau in this make-or-break year for the environment. My thanks to Jorge Laguna, Ulf Bjornholm and Stadler Trengove for helping navigate all of the above on the governance front.

And with these words, I end my monthly letter to you. Thank you for the hard work in a tough month. Stay safe and stay healthy. As you may have heard me say at the Townhall, I continue to urge all colleagues to get vaccinated, whenever you have the opportunity. We are unfortunately nowhere near the end of the road as far as the pandemic goes, and we need to arm ourselves with the best from science to get through this.

My best wishes,
Inger

Btw you can keep track of what I am up to on twitter: @andersen_inger