



Law Division 2021 End Year Environmental Governance Update

WE SUPPORT STRONG LAWS AND INSTITUTIONS FOR A HEALTHY PLANET
AND PEOPLE

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1972-2022



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INTRODUCTION

UNEP's Law Division is the lead Division charged with carrying out the functions of UNEP in the field of environmental law and environmental governance. The Law Division promotes the contribution of the environmental dimension of sustainable development through law, national and international governance and related policy issues, including those related to Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).

The Law Division further supports States to implement policies, facilitates dialogue among States, and works with MEA Secretariats to support Parties to the respective MEAs in the implementation of their treaty obligations. The efforts of the Law Division extend to international, regional, and local levels.

This 2021 end of year newsletter features the comprehensive work of the Law Division in promoting sound environmental law and governance within and beyond borders, across the below areas:

ENVIRONMENTAL RULE OF LAW

Environmental Rule of Law provides the basis for improving environmental governance by connecting environmental needs to fundamental rights and obligations as essential elements of the rule of law. As a result, environmental sustainability is sustained through the reflection of universal moral values and ethical norms of behaviour.



National Focal Points of Montevideo Environmental Law Programme hold first meeting

From 2 to 4 June 2021, over 200 participants, including national focal points from Member States and other stakeholders, met for the online segment of the First Global Meeting of National Focal

Points for the Fifth Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law (Montevideo Programme V).

“The Montevideo Programme V is a flagship programme for UNEP and our Member States to strengthen environmental rule of law across the globe,” UNEP Executive Director, Inger Andersen, said.

Learn more about the Programme, the Global Meeting and its three key outcomes on UNEP-LEAP. The in-person (hybrid) session of the First Global Meeting will take place from 6 to 9 June 2022 in Nairobi, Kenya.

[Read about the Montevideo Environmental Law Programme](#)

[Visit the Law and Environmental Assistance Platform \(LEAP\)](#)

Kunming Declaration from the World Judicial Conference includes call for rights-based action to protect biodiversity

UNEP together with the Supreme People's Court of the People's Republic of China held the World Judicial Conference on Environment on 26 and 27 May 2021. This resulted in the adoption of the “Kunming Declaration of the World Judicial Conference on Environment”, which will serve as a normative guide to support the work of judges as they adjudicate cases on the environment. It outlines a shared understanding of approaches that the judiciary may adopt, as appropriate for their national jurisdiction, to advance and uphold environmental rule of law.

[Read about the World Judicial Conference](#)

UNEP supports countries to tackle environmental crime

On 16 December 2021, the UN General Assembly adopted [Resolution 76/185](#), on Preventing and combating crimes that affect the environment. The text of this resolution was approved by the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice at its 30th session in May 2021. UNEP had provided support during the deliberations of the draft at the Commission session. The resolution recalls UNEP's mandate as the leading global environmental authority and the relevant UNEA resolutions on the illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products, and acknowledges the work UNEP has carried out so far “in supporting States in their efforts to effectively prevent and combat crimes that affect the environment, including through inter-agency effective partnerships, such as the Green Customs Initiative”. The resolution further requests the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to “further enhance and expand its cooperation and coordination” with UNEP and other relevant organizations to deal with environmental crime.

UNEP continues to build capacity of frontline enforcement agents

- As part of the WasteForce project, UNEP and partners published the [Guidance for Prosecutors of Waste Crime](#), which provides an

overview of key issues in prosecution and enforcement of waste crime, recognizing the often cross-border actions of illegal trade and management of waste. UNEP supported the development of the Thai version of the WasteForce outreach video. [Watch the video.](#)

- Environmental protectors and entities from Asia were again recognized for their work on prevention of environmental crime at the [sixth edition of the Asia Environmental Enforcement Awards](#), organized virtually by UNEP, the UN Development Programme, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, INTERPOL, the World Customs Organization and the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Watch a recording of the ceremony [here](#).



<https://vimeo.com/651197438>

- The Asia Pacific Judicial Symposium on Best Practice in Environmental Courts and Adjudication was held in Bangkok, on 17 and 18 June 2021. The Symposium assembled over 100 judges from across the Asia and the Pacific region to network and share expertise on rules of procedure, sentencing and the role of foundational principles in environmental cases. It was co-organized by UNEP, the Office of the President of the Supreme Court, the Supreme Court of Thailand, and USAID Wildlife Asia. [Read more.](#)

- In May 2021, UNEP and USAID Wildlife Asia , launched an Introductory Course on International and National Environmental Law and Governance and provided an inaugural training for over 50 Thai judges in environmental law. [Read more.](#)
- In Ethiopia, UNEP provided support to review a training curriculum on prosecution of environmental crime, and a training manual for police. UNEP enhanced awareness relating to the protection of wildlife populations in Somalia by supporting the development of training modules for judges and prosecutors dealing with illegal wildlife trade.
- Peer-to-peer workshop held on the implementation of the Escazú Agreement across UN Agencies and Member States: The Escazú Agreement is a Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean. Following its entry into force in April 2021, UNEP and partners including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Stockholm University, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR, or UN Human Rights) held a workshop to enhance understanding among Member States and UN agencies on the content and strategies for implementation of the Agreement. The workshop also aimed to advocate for ratification of the Agreement in countries which have not yet done so. [Read more.](#)

- UNEP launches first global assessment of air pollution legislation:
On 2 September 2021, UNEP launched the First Global Assessment of Air Pollution Legislation (GAAPL). The report presents the findings of a study of air quality legislation in 194 countries and the European Union. It examines the legal measures for determining whether air quality standards are being met and what legal standards exist for failure to meet them, using the 2015 Air Quality Guidelines developed by the World Health Organization as a starting point. [Read the report.](#)



UNEP supports countries to strengthen laws to tackle plastic pollution

- In 2021, UNEP's Law Division supported the expansion of a 'Plastics Toolkit' on the UNEP Law and Environment Assistance Platform (UNEP-LEAP), through a [Plastics legislation explorer](#), a [Case studies database](#), a [Plastics glossary](#), and a [Legislative development step-by-step guide](#).

- In Asia and the Pacific, UNEP provided legal guidance to participating countries of the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA), on the management and prevention of marine litter from sea-based sources. Through a report which reviewed and compiled [existing legal frameworks](#) and national legislation, UNEP assessed gaps and barriers in implementation of international instruments to support national efforts to develop and strengthen legislative and policy frameworks related to sea based sources. International legal instruments included in the review were the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) and its Annexes, and the Code of Conduct of the Food and Agriculture Organization. This is in line with Action 2.1 of the COBSEA Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter.

- UNEP's Law Division supported [Cambodia](#), Malaysia, and the [Philippines](#), to prepare legal and policy guidance on addressing marine litter, together with the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA). The Guidance seeks to strengthen national legislative action based on National Action Plans on Marine Litter in line with the COBSEA Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter and resolutions of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA).

- UNEP supported the Pacific Regional Environment Programme to review the Convention for the Protection of Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region (Noumea Convention), and to develop elements for a regional legally binding agreement (protocol) to address marine litter under the Convention. In partnership with Dalhousie University, UNEP's Law Division also developed a [Plastics Toolbox: Business, Human Rights, and the Environment](#) to build the capacity and awareness of duty bearers in the East Asian Seas region to apply a human rights-based approach to legislation, policies and measures on marine litter and plastic management. The Division also prepared [factsheets](#) on marine litter legislation and its enforcement in Small Island Developing States and its impact on the enjoyment of the right to a healthy environment.
- In Latin America and the Caribbean, UNEP initiated a series of webinars on [“Marine Litter and Plastics: legal tool to address the crisis”](#). The webinars gathered stakeholders to share information, disseminate best practices and discuss solutions to address marine litter and plastic pollution at national and regional levels in Latin America and the Caribbean. UNEP also prepared [a compilation of policies, regulations, and strategies](#) in Latin America and the Caribbean to prevent marine litter and plastic waste. The team provided legal assistance to Parlatino (“The Latin

American Parliament”) in the drafting and parliamentary debate of a [Model Law on Marine Litter for Latin America and Caribbean countries](#), held eight virtual informative sessions and consultations on the Model Law for stakeholders including NGOs and private sector, and through this developed key recommendations and good practices.



- UNEP promoted reduction of marine and plastic pollution in Mexico through high level legislative dialogues, with the aim of updating the general law related to waste management and engaging the private sector to identify best practices and challenges faced by businesses when implementing bans on single-use plastics.
- UNEP also provided support to Colombia on approaching the challenges associated with the legal and regulatory aspects of addressing marine litter and plastic pollution. Following extensive in-country consultations, an analysis of the existing political and regulatory framework for Colombia was produced, titled Basuras

Marinas: opciones de política y recomendaciones para abordar la problemática en Colombia (Marine Litter: Policy Options and Recommendations to Address the Problem in Colombia). The publication, released in July 2021, provides a basis for the proposal of public policy options related to the control of marine litter in Colombia.

- The Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Forum on Business and Human Rights was held from 4 to 6 October 2021, and for the first time, environmental rights were part of the agenda. UNEP moderated a thematic session on “Business conduct and human rights to address environmental damage” and co-organized a session on the “Impact of plastics on Human Rights”, jointly with the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL), la Fundación Marviva, Azúl, Break Free from Plastics (BFFP) Latinoamérica, and the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA). More information is available [here](#) (Spanish only).
- In Africa, the UNEP Law Division supported the review and compilation of legislation and policies on marine litter in national and regional levels; the development of a marine litter regional guide for the development of legislation; and a regional consultation on an Africa-wide framework of marine litter. This consultation place on 11 and 12 November 2021, [together with](#)

[WIOMSA](#), taking into account work carried out under the Nairobi, Abidjan, Barcelona and Jeddah Conventions, the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), as well as under the African Union Commission and regional economic communities.

Judicial capacity building supported through the Global Judicial Portal

The Global Judicial Portal is a platform designed by and for judges to provide greater access to environmental jurisprudence, developed by the Global Judicial Institute on the Environment (GJIE) and UNEP. The Portal has three main components: a user-fed database of jurisprudence, a networking and forum section for judges, and a repository of useful judicial resources, including e-learning and training materials.

[Access the Global Judicial Portal](#)

UNEP supported the Inaugural Oceania Environmental Law Conference from 14 to 16 July 2021. The Conference had over 700 registered participants from 57 countries. UNEP was one of the organizing partners. UNEP presented our work on judicial capacity building in the Pacific and an upcoming course for judges and lawyers. A Conference Outcomes Statement was adopted which will form an important baseline and normative guidance for the environmental law agenda in the Pacific over the coming years. [Read more](#)

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HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The [right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment](#) is essential to protect people and the planet. Advancing human rights obligations related to the environment empowers individuals, peoples, and communities to combat the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. UNEP supports the recognition, advancement and implementation of human rights related to the environment in a multifaceted approach, including through [the Environmental Rights Initiative](#).

UNEP and other UN partners supported the adoption of the historic resolution recognizing the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment by the UN Human Rights Council (A/HRC/RES/48/13). The landmark resolution, adopted on 8 October 2021, formally recognizes that a healthy environment is a human right at the global level for the first time. UNEP will continue to work with all stakeholders including States, UN partners, and civil society organizations to promote and implement the right.

“The adoption of the resolution on the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable

environment by the UN Human Rights Council is a breakthrough moment for environmental justice. The decision is a shield for individuals and communities against a plethora of risks to their health and livelihoods”, Inger Andersen, Executive Director of UNEP said.

In June 2021, the Heads of UN entities, including Executive Director of UNEP, Inger Andersen, endorsed STEP-UP, a joint commitment to promote the right of children, youth and future generations to a healthy environment and their meaningful participation in decision-making at all levels, in relation to climate action and climate justice. STEP-UP was developed as one of the strategic interventions under the UN Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights. UNEP is implementing STEP-UP in partnership with UN organizations as well as children and youth and their organizations.

Joint statement of United Nations entities on the right to healthy environment

- **UNEP partners with Global Network for Human Rights and the Environment to convene first Summer-Winter School.** UNEP, in partnership with the Global Network for Human Rights and the Environment (GNHRE), hosted their first annual online Summer/Winter school from 21 to 25 June 2021 themed “Critical Perspectives in Human Rights and the Environment”. The Summer/Winter school consisted of a series of lectures and panel discussions hosted by leading experts, practitioners and researchers working at the cutting edge of human rights and the environment. Participants gained an in-depth understanding of the most pressing issues of our time, discovered and engaged with the latest research and participated in discussions and debates. [Read more.](#)

Spotlight: UNEP’s Asia and the Pacific office
champions for advocacy and thought
leadership on human rights and environment



- On 21 April 2021, UNEP co-hosted a webinar on protection of environmental human rights defenders in Asia and the Pacific. [Watch the webinar's recording.](#)
- UNEP, in partnership with the UN Human Rights Regional Office for the Pacific, hosted a Pacific Environmental Defenders Forum on 14 and 15 June 2021. During the forum defenders learnt about tools and mechanisms to support their work and built solidarity amongst the Pacific communities advocating for the environment. [Read more.](#)
- UNEP, and the UN Human Rights South-East Asia office issued a statement condemning the arrest of environmental defenders in

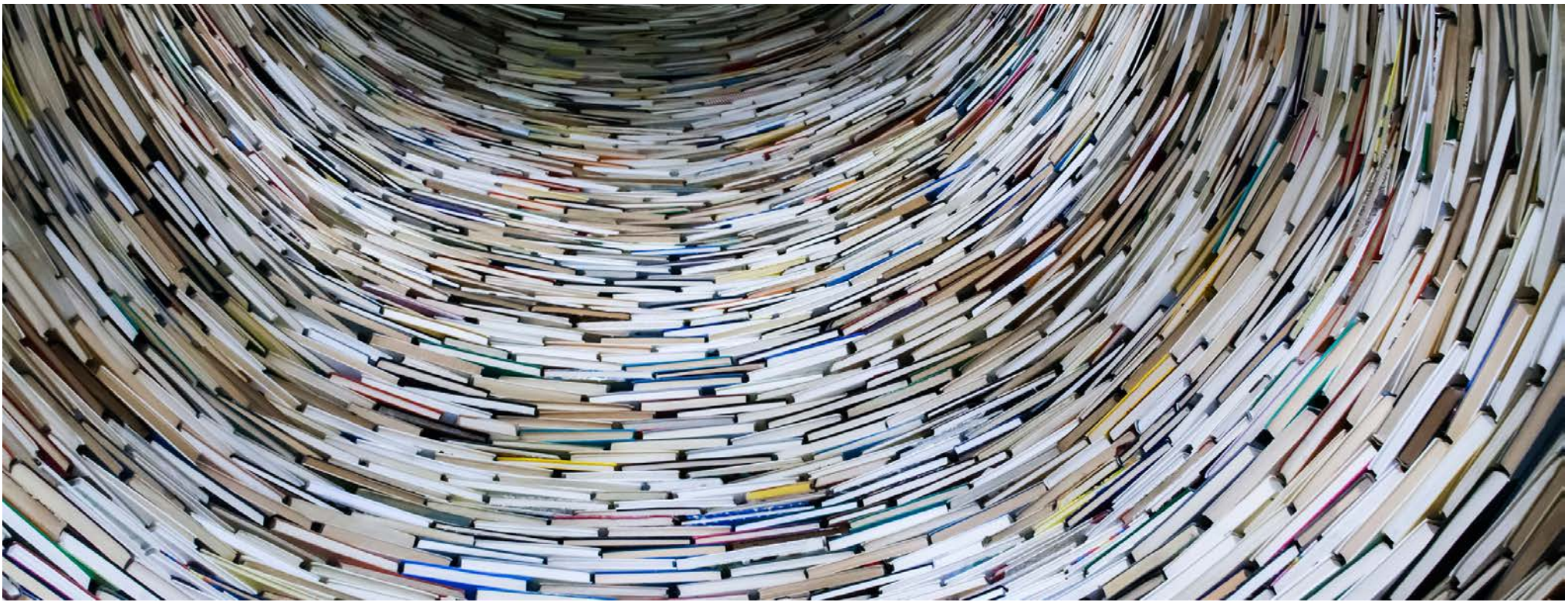
Cambodia. [Read more.](#)

- UNEP was an organizing partner of the “UN Responsible Business and Human Rights Forum Asia Pacific: The new decade of action” event held from 1 to 4 June 2021. UNEP convened six sessions on environmental rights issues including on human rights, pollution, biodiversity and climate change. Other sessions examined broader environmental rights, and the role of advocates for the environment in contributing towards sustainable and responsible business conduct. [Access the session recordings.](#)
- The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), with UNEP, UN Human Rights, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), held a Regional ASEAN-UN "Joint Expert Working Group Meeting on Human Rights and the Environment” from 8 to 10 June 2021. [Read more.](#)
- A Technical Briefing Paper was prepared for the Expert Meeting on Human Rights and the Environment. The paper provides an overview of good practices on the implementation, protection, and promotion of procedural access rights to enable the right to a safe, clean healthy and sustainable environment. [Access the Technical Briefing Paper.](#)

- In May 2021, UNEP launched an “Introductory Course on Human Rights and the Environment for National Human Rights Institutions”. This is the first course for national human rights bodies to support the application of their protection and promotion mandate on human rights to the environment. [Access the course on InforMEA](#).
- Also in May 2021, UNEP launched a Capacity Building Plan for UNEP Staff at the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (2021-2023) on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Gender Equality. This builds on the results of a staff survey conducted in 2020 and aims to build capacity among UNEP staff to incorporate human rights-based approaches (HRBA) and gender mainstreaming within all activities of the UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.
- UNEP prepared the first of a series of issue briefs on environment and human rights focusing on climate justice. These briefs set out recommendations for addressing challenges to climate justice to support policy makers, civil society, and donors. The briefs also provide key messages on climate justice for advocacy by the UN. [Read more](#). Key messages on climate justice were disseminated during a high-level panel on ‘Ensuring Access to Environmental Justice for All’ as part of an event titled Southeast Asia's

challenges to sustainable and inclusive development held from 30
September to 1 October 2021.

Resources



- UNEP – UN Human Rights Key Messages on Human Rights and Biodiversity. [Available in all UN languages](#)
- UNEP – UN Human Rights Key Messages on Human Rights and Hazardous Substances. [Available in all UN languages](#)
- UNEP – UN Human Rights Key Messages on the Environment and Gender Equality. [Available here.](#)
- [Environmental Justice and Plastic Pollution](#) - This report explores the injustices brought about by plastic pollution. It examines how vulnerable communities are disproportionately and negatively affected during all stages of the plastic lifecycle. It reviews legal and policy frameworks, exploring historical successes and

challenges, and proposes actions for various state and non-state stakeholders. It is available in English and Spanish.

- [Issue Brief: Human rights and the environmental rule of law](#) – this Summary Brief links SDG16 (on peace, justice and strong institutions), the environmental rule of law, human rights and a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.
- [Human Rights and Pollution Videos](#).

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MULTILATERAL
ENVIRONMENTAL
AGREEMENTS:

IMPLEMENTATION AND COMPLIANCE

Collaboration among countries is important to maximize the global impact of good environmental governance. Through working with experts and governments, UNEP has continued to work on strengthening implementation and compliance with Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).

Data Reporting Tool (DaRT) contributes to digital transformation for Multilateral Environmental Agreements

- With the post 2020 global biodiversity framework, timely, high-quality data and knowledge is critical to understand challenges, guide responses and track progress at the national, regional and global levels. Collating national data from multiple government

ministries and other official sources is always a challenge. To address this, UNEP's Data Reporting Tool for Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) – DaRT is the first tool supporting Parties to effectively use synergies in the field of knowledge and information management for national reporting of biodiversity-related conventions.

- As testimony to the significant role that DaRT has contributed towards digital transformation, DaRT won the UNEP Kipepeo award 2021 under the Innovation Category, out of the total 19 submissions across from UNEP. Since the tool was rolled out in March 2019, 15 countries have adopted DaRT and are already using a DaRT national working space. Users from 134 countries have visited the website.
- To support uptake of DaRT, UNEP has conducted a series of webinars and workshops, bringing together national stakeholders and establishing common national DaRT working spaces. For example, in February 2021, UNEP supported Cameroon to establish its DaRT national working space to facilitate biodiversity knowledge management and reporting to different MEAs.

**Enforcement and complying with the
implementation of environmental treaties and**

goals in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries promoted

- The ACP MEAs Programme promotes the enforcement of and compliance with environmental treaties and goals in Africa, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) countries by building national and institutional capacity and strengthening their policies and legislative frameworks to fulfill their MEAs obligations. The ACP MEAs 3 programme undertook a mapping exercise to establish a concrete understanding of how the programme contributes to realizing the outcomes of the 8th special session of African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN)) and the twenty-second meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean (FEMLAC) held in November 2020 and February 2021 respectively.
- In collaboration with regional hubs and programme partners, the ACP MEAs 3 programme will focus on linking the ongoing actions with the outcomes of the above two meetings. In 2021, the Programme in consultation with partners developed a Youth Engagement Strategy to support a Youth Engagement and Training Initiative (YETI) focusing on issues of biodiversity. Several youth networks in the African region were involved and more than 37 youth from seven countries completed three InforMEA courses

about the Convention on Biological Diversity, Environmental Governance, and Human Rights. Twenty of these youth benefited from will be placed on a mentorship programme with experts.



- The Law Division through the ACP MEAs 3 Programme in collaboration with the Africa Network of Environmental Journalists (ANEJ) organized a virtual capacity building and awareness-raising briefing session for environmental journalists in Africa on issues of environmental governance, focusing on chemicals and waste management and related MEAs. About 100 participants from 48 countries in Africa, along with the Minister of Environment from the Democratic Republic of Congo and senior officials from Mauritania participated in the briefing and more other training has been planned to empower the journalists.

- With financial support from the ACP MEAs 3 programme, the Law Division convened a capacity building workshop involving participants from four African countries (Gambia, Mali, Senegal and Uganda) in Dakar, Senegal on technical guidelines, national frameworks, legislation and mechanisms for the effective implementation of chemicals and waste related MEAs. The workshop focused on the mapping of national legal frameworks and institutional capacities on the management and control of waste and chemicals and waste and disseminated technical guidelines on hazardous wastes and chemicals management developed by the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm conventions.

“Biosafety Clearing House 3” project supports implementation of the Cartagena Protocol

- UNEP supports countries to build and sustain capacities to effectively participate in the [Biosafety Clearing House \(BCH\)](#). The Clearing House is an online platform set up by the [Cartagena Protocol](#) on Biosafety to facilitate exchange of information between countries, on Living Modified Organisms (LMOs).
- In 2021, the BCH III project team organised 13 national workshops, both online and in-person: Six in Africa (Angola, Botswana,

Cameroon, Eritrea, Gambia, South Africa), four in Central and Eastern Europe (Albania, Armenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Turkey) and three in Asia (Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan). Workshops were organized with support from regional biosafety consultants (Regional Advisors) using a [Virtual Learning Environment](#).

- On 6 December 2021, the BCH III team actively supported the launch of a [new userfriendly Biosafety Clearing House platform](#) by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. This was following migration and integration of the Biosafety Clearing House with other Clearing Houses: Access and Benefit-Sharing Clearing House and the central biodiversity Clearing House Mechanism (CHM).
- Following the launch of the new BCH platform, the Regional Advisors adapted the content of their training materials for future workshops. Finally, the project team started a joint campaign with the Secretariat to raise awareness about the new BCH platform and biosafety in general (social media toolkit and video for a wide audience), while also developing its own communication products with the help of the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB).

Course on the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework held online for first time

The Post-2020 Biodiversity Agenda

9 SEPTEMBER 2021 | 14:00 CEST | REGISTER ON ZOOM!

Please join us for the kick-off event of the 10-part webinar series, 'International Biodiversity Law Post-2020', hosted by the UEF-UNEP MEA Course. In this 90-minute event, guest speakers Elizabeth Mrema and Basile van Havre will be discussing 'The Post-2020 Biodiversity Agenda', with a moderated Q&A session at the end.



Elizabeth Mrema, Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity



Basile van Havre, Co-Chair of the Open-Ended Working Group on the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

COURSE ON MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS
University of Eastern Finland – United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kw1886nf8Lc&list=PLZQMnKaG-AimgLELrC7OWFzb6U3-AMfQ8>

- In 2021, the UNEP Law Division, in cooperation with the University of Eastern Finland, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland and the Ministry of the Environment of Finland organized the 17th Edition of the Course on Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

- The theme of the course was the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework. As the COVID-19 pandemic still ravaged the world, the course was held online for the first time with the format adapted to fit the learning modalities. A broad range of topics related to biodiversity governance were addressed in 10 public webinars. In parallel, general issues relating to international environmental diplomacy were covered in Negotiation Training sessions which were composed of lectures, exercises, and workshops.
- The course had 32 core participants (23 women, 9 men) from 27 countries with diverse backgrounds, including ministries, institutions responsible for environmental matters, academia and international and national governmental and non-governmental organizations active in environmental matters. Several biodiversity-related MEA National Focal Points were also among the participants. The webinars were very well attended with over 190 live participants and many more views on YouTube.

**Faith leaders call for action to restore
ecosystems**



- The voices of eminent faith leaders, including Pope Francis and Imam Al-Azhar, were given in support of the UN Decade on [Ecosystem Restoration \(2021-2030\)](#) in line with the Faith for Earth strategy of engagement on ecosystems restoration.
- On 3 June 2021, Joyce Msuya, the (then) Deputy Executive Director of UNEP joined an all-women faith leaders' panel in a webinar to highlight how the Faith for Earth Initiative and indigenous communities embrace ethical and spiritual responsibility to protect our planet. The Faith for Earth Initiative and indigenous communities drive urgent actions in places that promise to restore degraded forests, clean up rivers and coasts,

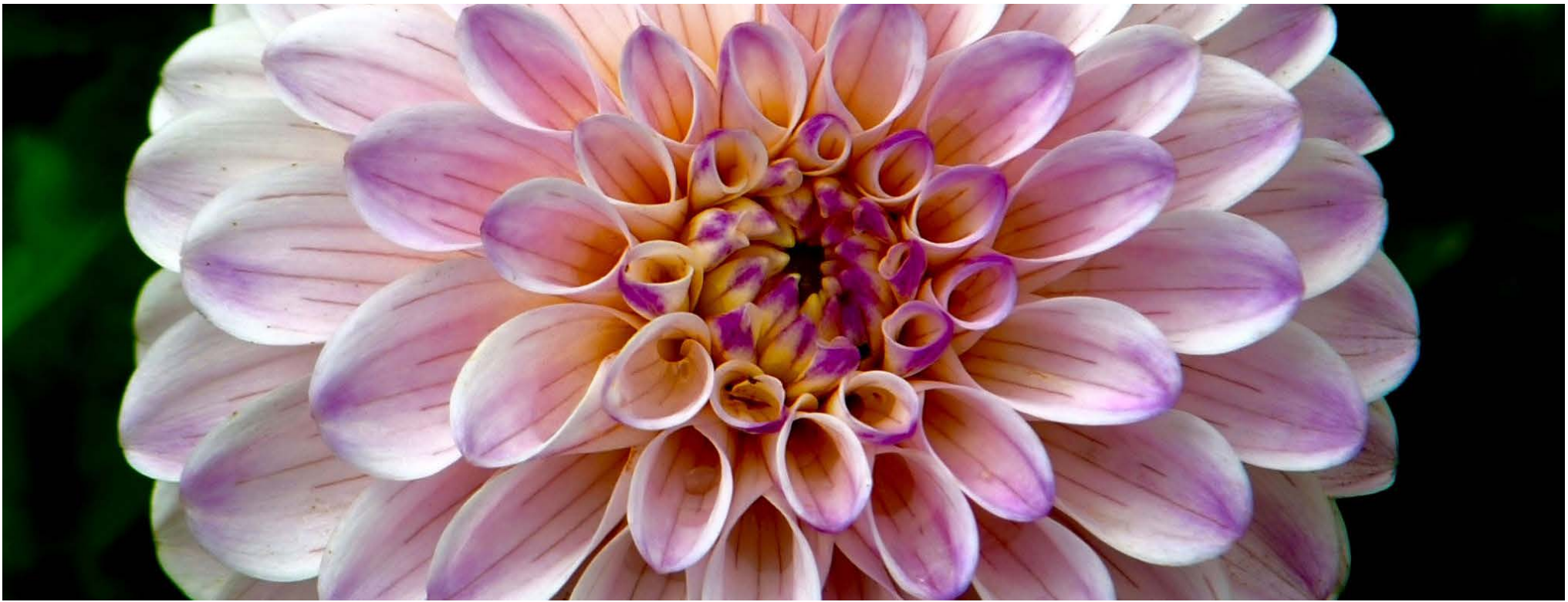
and green cities. Despite managing only 25 per cent of the world's surface area, indigenous peoples protect 80 per cent of global biodiversity.

- Under the patronage of Her Royal Highness (HRH) Crown Princess Mette Marit, the [Hope Cathedral](#), inspired by the boundless ocean and care for our planet, opened its doors to the world as a source of inspiration and a place to unite via a [Live Inauguration Ceremony](#). The Cathedral was fully built from reclaimed plastic from the ocean and other sustainable materials. [Watch this video about Hope Cathedral](#), portraying the result of cooperation across national identities, ages, and faiths, both to clean up the shores and to build peace and strong communities. Follow their journey in [videos](#), and [read](#) about it.
- Food plays an important cultural and spiritual role in people's lives. Today's production, extraction and transportation methods are not aligned with spiritual values. For Muslims, the Qur'an speaks of lawful food and of principles of balance, justice, and health. This has been demonstrated in a report titled [Islam and Food Systems](#).

Course on implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements extended to Middle

East and North Africa region

- In November and December 2021, UNEP's Law Division and the Center for Governance and Sustainability at the University of Massachusetts Boston held the second phase of an online course on implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs). The 5-module course aimed to stimulate dialogue and information sharing among national focal points and experts working on biodiversity- and chemicals and waste- related conventions.
- The course brought together 18 participants from five countries from the Middle East and North Africa region (Iran, Jordan Morocco, Qatar, and Tunisia). Participants shared experiences on effective implementation of MEAs at the national level. Among the original content produced for the course were video interviews with convention Secretariats on best practices and challenges of implementation. The online course also used existing materials from the InforMEA learning platform. The second phase was prepared building on feedback from the first phase, which was offered to 5 African countries in 2020.



Experts discuss strengthening coordination and collaboration between biodiversity, and chemicals and waste agreements

- In September 2021, UNEP organized an [expert consultation workshop](#) as part of a project on strengthening coordination and collaboration between biodiversity and chemicals and waste clusters, funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers. The workshop drew from a study and an overall analysis on the [potential for strengthening cooperation and synergies across biodiversity as](#)

[well as chemicals and waste clusters](#), including a case study on pesticides conducted by the UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) as part of the project.

- The workshop brought together national focal points and experts working on biodiversity and chemicals and waste clusters, to identify challenges and opportunities in strengthening cooperation and coordination across the two clusters at all levels with a specific focus on national-level experiences.

UNEP supports countries to implement and comply with the Montreal Protocol

- The [Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer](#) is a global agreement to protect the Earth's ozone layer by phasing out the chemicals that deplete it. UNEP is an implementing agency of the Montreal Protocol's Multilateral Fund.
- In this capacity, the UNEP Law Division's OzonAction Branch provided compliance assistance to 147 Article 5 countries; and supported implementation, monitoring and reporting of institutional strengthening projects in 105 countries leading to

timely and efficient data reporting under Article 7 of the Montreal Protocol and under country programme data reporting.

- OzonAction supported 102 Article 5 countries in implementing their HCFC phase-out management plans (HPMPs), as lead implementing agency in 74 countries and as cooperating implementing agency in 28 countries. The team also supported the operation of the regional networks of national ozone officers by organizing 16 network and thematic virtual meetings and other meetings (a total of 50 meetings).
- Participants discussed the informal prior informed consent mechanism; gender mainstreaming; establishing legislation and policy measures including those related to the Kigali Amendment; trade of controlled substances under the Protocol and prevention of illegal trade; labelling requirements for HCFC cylinders; data reporting including Harmonized System (HS) codes for HFCs and HFC baseline calculation; ozone science and constraints in the implementation of funded activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- OzonAction supported customs officers and national ozone officers by providing information on trade in controlled substances, and engagement in enforcement operations, in partnership with the World Customs Organization. The team promoted gender mainstreaming through project support as per

the Multilateral Fund guidelines and Compliance and Assistance Programme services as a discussion topic in network and thematic meetings, and in four OzonAction webinars.

High level leaders make faith-based climate commitments

- On 20 September 2021, the UK Presidency of the UN Climate Conference in Glasgow (COP26) joined the Multi-Faith Action Group for Climate in the [Faith & Climate Summit](#) to launch a series of Faith-based Climate Commitments.
- On 4 October 2021, a [unified appeal](#) on the faith community's expectations of COP26 and their commitment to action was signed. With support from Faith for Earth and after seven months of preparation, the commitment to action was made by 40 highest level eminent religious leaders, accompanied by scientists, with an invitation from the Holy See, and the United Kingdom and Italian governments. The appeal is an important milestone and the beginning of a journey to ensure moral and spiritual responsibility towards people and the planet as our life support system.



Fund supports countries to protect African elephants and their habitats

- The African Elephant Fund has continued supporting countries to protect elephants and their habitats amidst increased threats. This response has proven crucial following a decrease in funding allocated to conservation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- As of 31 December 2021, forty-four projects were completed across the 38 African elephant range States funded by the Fund. Of these, four were projects initiated through an emergency call for proposals issued by the Fund in 2020 to provide funding to range States to address elephant conservation challenges related to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- In April 2021, a new Steering Committee for the Fund was elected. The Chair and Vice-Chair positions which are held on a rotational basis by the four sub-regions (Central, East, South and West Africa) was held by Central Africa. Under the new Committee, the review of the African Elephant Action Plan, which had been disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, resumed in September 2021 with the aim of finalizing the revised Plan in 2022 together with the range States.
- Further, the review of the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Steering Committee were finalized and adopted in the last quarter of 2021. The African elephant range States endorsed the new Terms of Reference via a written no-objection procedure.
- The African Elephant Fund is a multi-donor trust fund which implements the African Elephant Action Plan, under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The administrative office of the fund is hosted by UNEP's Law Division.

[Visit the African Elephant Fund Website](#)

Bern II consultation workshop of biodiversity-related conventions on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

- In January 2021, UNEP convened the Bern II Workshop of Biodiversity-Related Conventions on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework to mobilize coordinated inputs from various MEAs that strengthen cooperation and synergies with regards to biodiversity at multiple levels.
- Cooperation on areas such as common indicators, coherent reporting, capacity building, and financial mechanisms were recommended. The report of the consultation workshop has been made available as an information document to inform the upcoming post-2020 negotiation process of the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG-3) and the meetings of the subsidiary bodies of the Convention on Biological Diversity. It will be considered in negotiations for the CoP 15 in Kunming, China later in 2022. [Read more](#)

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INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

Institutions around the world are fundamental to sound environmental governance. These institutions are the backbone for furthering actions to protect people and the environment. Institutions provide platforms where laws, policies and discussions are continually sustained, as well as serving as information reserves.

- UNEP delivers on environmental law education: In September and December 2021, UNEP supported the Legal Education Board (LEB) of the Philippines to integrate environmental law in the curriculum of law degrees. Over 100 academics enrolled on the Board examined the environmental and natural resources law syllabus development, and pedagogy.

Environmental Law Teachers Online Training Program: Launch Event

Environmental Law Teachers Online Training Program: Pedagogical
Enrichment on Environmental Law



- UNEP's Law Division continues supporting the Association of Environmental Law Lecturers in Middle East and North Africa (ASSELLMU) in its efforts to promote environmental law in academic institutions in the region. The third conference of the Association took place from 1 to 5 November 2021. It featured a five-day intensive and high-profile Train the Trainers workshop organized, and brought together environmental educators, university teachers, trainers, and practitioners to learn from each other on how to strengthen environmental law teaching and practice in the region. The Train the Trainers manual is available in [English](#) and [Arabic](#).

- UNEP engages parliaments on a green COVID-19 recovery: UNEP and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) held capacity building workshops for members of Parliament and staff of the National Assemblies of Seychelles (9 and 10 September 2021) and Zimbabwe (29 September 2021). The workshops provided participants an understanding on parliamentarians' role in promoting a green COVID-19 recovery and enhance their capacity to legislate, exercise their oversight functions and make budgetary decisions accordingly. The workshops also contributed to identifying how parliamentary staff can support parliamentarians in strengthening legislation for a green recovery and to equip them with tools (e.g., the [Law and Climate Change Toolkit](#)) to incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals and green recovery principles in research and legislative analysis.
- The workshops were tailored to address the countries' areas of need, such as climate finance for Zimbabwe, and renewable energy for Seychelles. Additionally, UNEP provided expertise in regional and global meetings organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union. These were the Parliamentary webinar on [the impact of COVID-19 on SDG implementation in the UN Economic Commission for Europe region](#), held on 9 March 2021; the Parliamentary webinar on [ensuring that COVID-19 strategies are in](#)

[line with the SDGs within the Asia Pacific region](#), held on 16 March 2021; the Parliamentary webinar on [sustainable approaches to COVID-19 recovery in Central Asia](#), held on 29 June 2021; and the first [global parliamentary meeting on achieving the SDGs](#), held from 28 to 30 September 2021.

- UNEP works to strengthen environmental data for effective policy and to achieve Sustainable Development Goals: During the 4-year period ending in December 2021, UNEP worked with the governments of Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Colombia and Guyana to provide an enhanced understanding of environmental data for measuring progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and improved policy coherence for sustainable development at national level. UNEP's national support demonstrated its comparative advantage in institutional development and linking data to policy gaps with regards to Sustainable Development Goals. The project also assisted governments in Covid-19 green recovery responses related to health and environment. [Read more](#).

UNEP and partners call for environmental and spiritual ethics

- Database on faith action on Sustainable Development Goals produced: The Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology joined the partnership between Faith for Earth, Parliament of World Religions, Bhumi Global, and the United Religions Initiative, and [produced a database](#) where faith-based environment-related projects and campaigns by faith actors can be recorded.
- Faith for Earth and King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue ([KAICIID](#)) issued a [policy brief](#) focusing on the challenges presented by climate change, nature degradation and pollution, calling for an integrated model for global environmental governance. One such model is [Al-Mizan: A Covenant for the Earth](#) seeking to mobilize the world's 1.8 billion Muslims and the global community at large in applying the teachings of the Qur'an and Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) in advancing environmental action.
- In 2020, the historic Skálholt Cathedral hosted the [Faith for Nature: Multi-Faith Action](#) where 450 participants committed to support a global process establishing the Faith for Earth Coalition. Steps towards realizing [Our Sacred Commitment](#) were bolstered in October 2021 when the Office of the Bishop of Iceland hosted [Skálholt III](#), presenting a set of [recommendations](#) in support of a proposal for submission of a draft resolution on ethics and faith in

advancing environmental governance at the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), by the Government of Iceland.

Poverty and Environment Initiative publishes series on Stories of Change 2021

In 2021, the series [Stories of Change 2021](#) was published by UNDP– UNEP Poverty-Environment Action for Sustainable Development Goals through the generous financial support of the Governments of Austria, Belgium, Norway, Sweden and the European Union. The Stories covered various themes including [Supporting young green entrepreneurs to tackle environmental problems and climate change in Rwanda](#); influencing [public finance budget processes; investing in the sustainable management of environment and natural resources \(ENR\) and resilience](#) to reduce poverty; [blue bonds for Sustainable Development Goals in Bangladesh](#); strengthening Indonesia's climate finance governance through [climate budget tagging and green sukuk issuance](#); and [tackling waste management in Peru](#) from a social perspective.

Collaboration and Sustainability in the United Nations promoted



- UN Environment Management Group delivers on biodiversity, green recovery, and natural resources management: The [UN Common Approach to Biodiversity](#) was on 4 May 2021 endorsed by the Chief Executives Board of the Environment Management Group (EMG), building on the EMG’s work on biodiversity. On 25 May 2021, the EMG report “[Supporting the Global Biodiversity Agenda: a United Nations System Commitment for Action to assist Member States delivering on the post-2020 global biodiversity](#)”

[framework](#)” was launched with the UN Common Approach to Biodiversity at a [High-level Dialogue](#). The report highlights the relevance of biodiversity to the work of UN entities and how an increasingly coherent approach will yield multiple benefits across the Sustainable Development Goals.

- Recommendations for more coherent and effective policies and action were provided in the following environmental nexus areas: Green Recovery from COVID19 and Food System Resilience through Integrated Natural Resource Management. This was done by means of organizing virtual Nexus Dialogues.
- [A 3-Part Series of Nexus Dialogues addressing COVID-19 for the Environment, was held on 27 April, 4 May, and 15 June 2021](#), organized in close collaboration with UNEP, UNEP-Finance Initiative, and the Regional Commissions New York Office, and the Regional Commissions for: Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Western Asia. The 3-Part Series fed into the Environment Management Group report [Inclusive Green Recovery: An Essential Post-COVID-19 Paradigm Shift to Recover Better](#) as part of the Consultative Process on COVID-19 and the Environment. An executive summary of the 3-Part Series can be found [here](#).

Sustainable United Nations strengthens internal management to reduce environmental impact

- UNEP's Sustainable United Nations (SUN) facility has been working on internalizing environmental sustainability management for over ten years. This long-term inter-agency endeavour relies on the leadership and technical support provided by UNEP to provide technical assistance including harmonized methodologies and tools to quantify and reduce the UN system's environmental impact; transparently report and communicate on efforts and improvements made throughout the UN system; and facilitate the networking and sharing of knowledge and experiences among sustainability focal points.
- From May to September 2021, the Sustainable United Nations team was principally focused on launching surveys for data collection on UN entities' environmental performance. Surveys in 2021 covered greenhouse gas emissions, waste, water, and air quality as well as an expanded survey on environmental governance and human resources.
- Over 50 entities provided data on aspects of their performance which was then reviewed and analysed by the Sustainable United Nations team for inclusion in the 2021 edition of the Greening the

Blue report which was launched on 8 November at COP26 in Glasgow.

- Each year, the Sustainable United Nations team organizes three inter-agency network and knowledge sharing sessions for the UN system's sustainability focal points involved with the Issue Management Group's work.
- The 36th Issue Management Group meeting was held from 14 to 16 June 2021. Over 100 participants (60 per cent female, 40 per cent male) from 49 entities attended. Presentations on the greening experiences of the European Parliament, the UN International Computing Centre as well as the work of the SUN team were delivered.

Thank you for reading.

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[Visit the Environmental Rights and Governance webpages](#)

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