

Partnerships

UNEP engages in partnerships to multiply its results as well as those of its partners. Environmental issues require concerted efforts from all sectors of an increasingly interconnected global society and partnerships offer a mechanism to foster such joint action as well as an opportunity for non-traditional actors to work with the United Nations.





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Partnership Principles

A partnership is a voluntary and collaborative relationship between parties, in which all partners agree to work together to achieve a common purpose or undertake a specific task and as mutually agreed, to share risks, responsibilities, resources and benefits. Partnerships may involve two or more parties and may vary in size and importance. They may be one-off undertakings to deliver specific activities or more strategic multi-year collaboration projects. They may involve funding either to or from UNEP or in many cases UNEP may cooperate with partners towards common objectives without an exchange of financial resources.

The UNEP Partnership Policy is anchored by three key Partnership Principles that should be applied throughout the lifecycle of each partnership.



Partnership Principle I:

Partnerships are based on integrity, objectivity, fairness, and transparency, in adherence with the UN Charter²⁰ and General Assembly Partnership Principles.



Partnership Principle II:

Partnerships support the objectives, mandate and mission of UNEP and MEA Secretariats and shall lead to pre-defined outputs, and sustainable outcomes and impacts, and promote transformative change and scalable



Partnership Principle III:

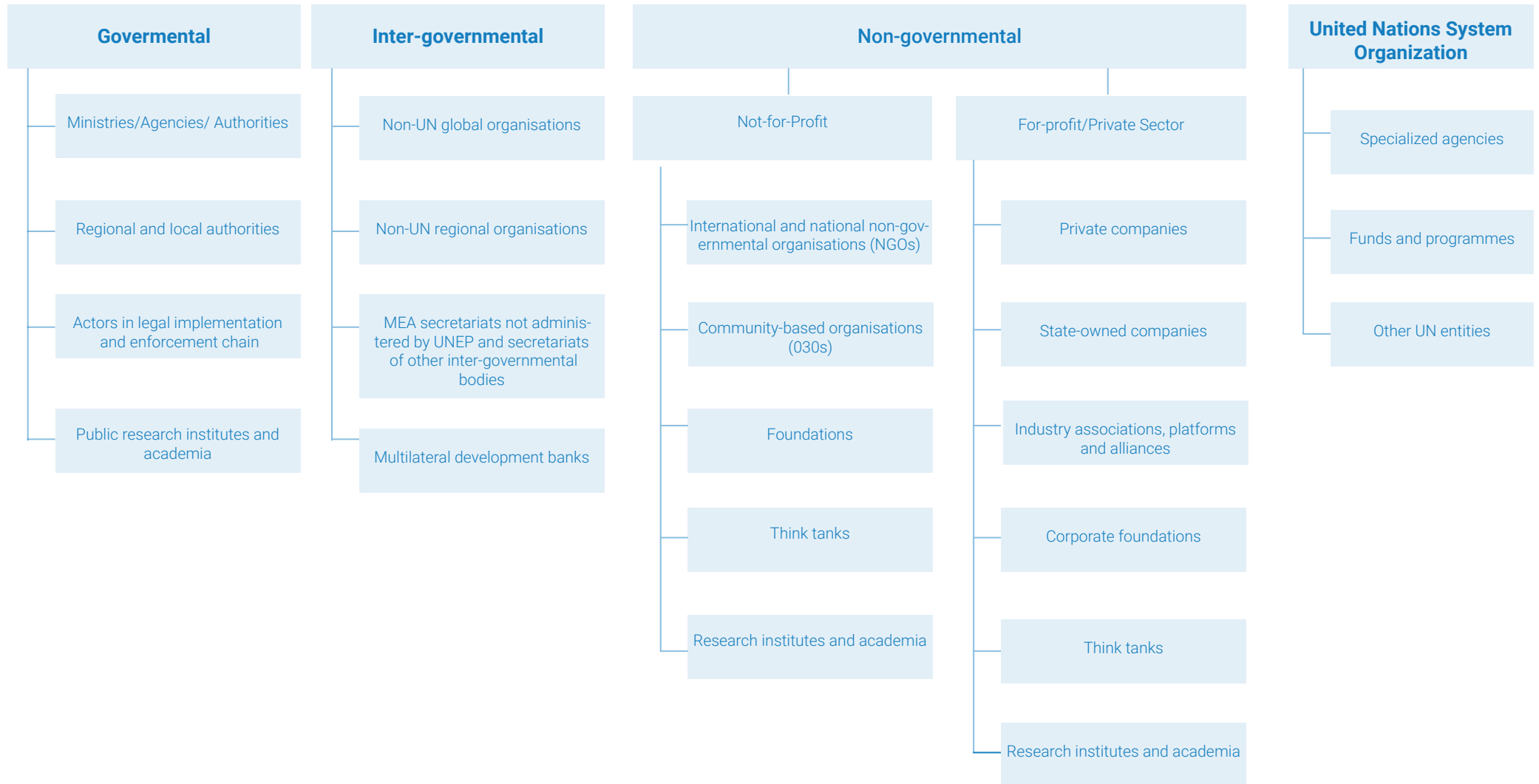
Partnerships are actively managed, and risks are identified, documented, and systematically mitigated



Further information on each of these partnership principles is available in the [UNEP Partnership Policy and Procedures 2020](#). Please note that this is currently being updated. Please return to this page for further updates in Q2 2023.

Partner Categories

Partnerships can be entered into with the following categories and sub-categories of entities:



Partnership Modalities

The purpose and intended outcomes of a Partnership, together with the Partner Category, determine how a partnership is classified, or in other words, the Partnership Modality. Engagement with Partners by UNEP covers four (4) modalities:

1. **Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships**
2. **Cooperation Partnerships**
3. **Implementation Partnerships**
4. **Donor Partnerships.**

The Partnership Modality determines the need by UNEP for partner identification, validation (due diligence), assessment, and documentation, for example in legal instruments. The table below illustrates the different partner modalities within UNEP and identifies the internal procedures to follow for each.

PARTNERSHIP MODALITY				
	MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIP	COOPERATION PARTNERSHIP	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERSHIP	DONOR PARTNERSHIP
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes membership-based forums, platforms, and networks. • Stakeholders from all Partner Categories may join toward knowledge sharing and capacity building in various sectors. • Membership may include fees. Examples include the UNEP Finance Initiative and the Sustainable Rice Platform. • Do not involve one-to-one relationships between Partners and UNEP or MEA Secretariats. UNEP or an MEA Secretariat maintain multiple concurrent relationships with Partners in the same forum, platform, or network. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not involve financial commitments. • Generally used to establish a framework for cooperation involving a one-to-one relationship between UNEP or an MEA Secretariat and the Partner toward specific pre-determined areas of cooperation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involves financial commitments. • UNEP or MEA Secretariats disburse funds to the Partner. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involves financial commitments. • UNEP or MEA Secretariats receive contributions from a Partner (cash and in-kind).

PARTNERSHIP MODALITY				
	MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIP	COOPERATION PARTNERSHIP	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERSHIP	DONOR PARTNERSHIP
Prospective Partner Identification procedures required.	Not applicable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prospective partners shall be identified and selected against pre-determined criteria through a transparent, fair and competitive process, embodying the principle of equal opportunity, with openly informed and documented decision-making. In the case of partnerships funded through global environmental funds, There are specific listed requirements and exceptions related to Partner Identification in the case of partnerships funded through global environmental funds <p>For detailed information refer to: UNEP Partnership Policy 2020 & Procedures (PPP) – Procedure 2.</p>		Not applicable.
Partner Validation and Due Diligence procedures required.	Step 1. Partner Categorisation and Registration, except where the relevant forum / platform / network has separate criteria, in which case those shall apply.	Step 1. Partner Categorization and Registration	Step 1. Partner Categorization and Registration	Step 1. Partner Categorization and Registration
		Step 2. Partner Due Diligence Assessment (Level 1)	Step 2. Partner Due Diligence Assessment (Level 2)	Step 2. Partner Due Diligence Assessment (Level 2)
	<p><u>See UNEP Partnership Policy & Procedures (PPP) 2020 – Procedure 3.</u></p> <p>Or</p> <p><u>Procedure 5 for applicability to partnerships funded through GEF, GCF or Adaptation Fund (AF)</u></p>			

PARTNERSHIP MODALITY				
	MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIP	COOPERATION PARTNERSHIP	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERSHIP	DONOR PARTNERSHIP
Partnership Assessment procedures required.	None	Step 1. Partnership Assessment	Step 1. Partnership Assessment	Step 1. Partnership Assessment
		Step 2. Risk Assessment and Risk Mitigation Plan, where applicable	Step 2. Risk Assessment and Risk Mitigation Plan, where applicable	Step 2. Risk Assessment and Risk Mitigation Plan, where applicable
<p><u>See UNEP Partnership Policy & Procedures (PPP) 2020 – Procedure 4.</u></p> <p>Or</p> <p><u>Procedure 5 for applicability to partnerships funded through GEF, GCF or Adaptation Fund (AF)</u></p>				
Partnership engagement documentation required.	<p>Legal instrument not required.</p> <p>Except where the relevant forum/platform/network has separate criteria, in which case those shall apply. The following documentation is required:</p>	<p>Legal instrument required: (Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), letter of agreement, exchange of letters) to establish a framework for cooperation or indicate a future intention to conclude a separate agreement for implementation of activities, and:</p> <p>Project Document, where applicable</p> <p>Justification of the Partner selection, including Partner’s Declaration on Exclusion Criteria, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PPP Procedure 2)</p>	<p>Legal instrument required: (Small-Scale Funding Agreement (SSFA), Project Cooperation Agreement (PCA), or other agreed upon template), and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Document, where applicable 	<p>Legal instrument required: (Donor agreement, pledge letter, UN to UN contribution agreement, or other agreed upon template), and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Document, where applicable

PARTNERSHIP MODALITY				
	MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIP	COOPERATION PARTNERSHIP	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERSHIP	DONOR PARTNERSHIP
<p>Partnership Engagement Documentation required.</p> <p>For information on UNEP Legal Instruments see Chapter 8 of this manual.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner Validation documents (PPP Procedure 3) • May require membership forms (which may include fees) or other documentation prescribed by the forum/platform/network 	<p>Partner Validation documents (PPP Procedure 3)</p> <p>Partnership Assessment and Risk Mitigation Plan, where applicable (see Procedure 4)</p> <p>Note: there are no requirements when engaging in a Cooperation Partnership prior to an Implementation or Donor Partnership.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justification of the Partner selection, including Partner’s Declaration on Exclusion Criteria, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PPP Procedure 2) • Partner Validation documents (PPP Procedure 3) • Partnership Assessment and Risk Mitigation Plan, where applicable (PPP Procedure 4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner Validation documents (PPP Procedure 3) • Partnership Assessment and Risk Mitigation Plan, where applicable (PPP Procedure 4)



Partnership or Procurement?

Partnerships are based on the pursuit of common objectives. UNEP and MEA Secretariats enter Implementation Partnerships with non-profit organizations, NGOs, and Governments, to collaborate and invest in-kind or cash resources. Those resources are then used to to implement activities directly executed by the Partner.

This contrasts with an entity which provides goods and services in exchange for direct financial gain and profit. UNEP and MEA Secretariats cannot disburse funds to a for-profit entity through Partnership Implementation Agreements. Generally, where the predominant purpose of a collaboration is for the acquisition of goods and services, the UNEP procurement process should be followed.

In extremely limited cases, where a for-profit entity is the only appropriate Partner for an intended Partnership engagement, Responsible Officers should see UNEP Partnership Policy & Procedures (PPP) 2020 – Procedure 1 for the process to seek clearance to disburse funds in accordance with this Policy and Procedure.

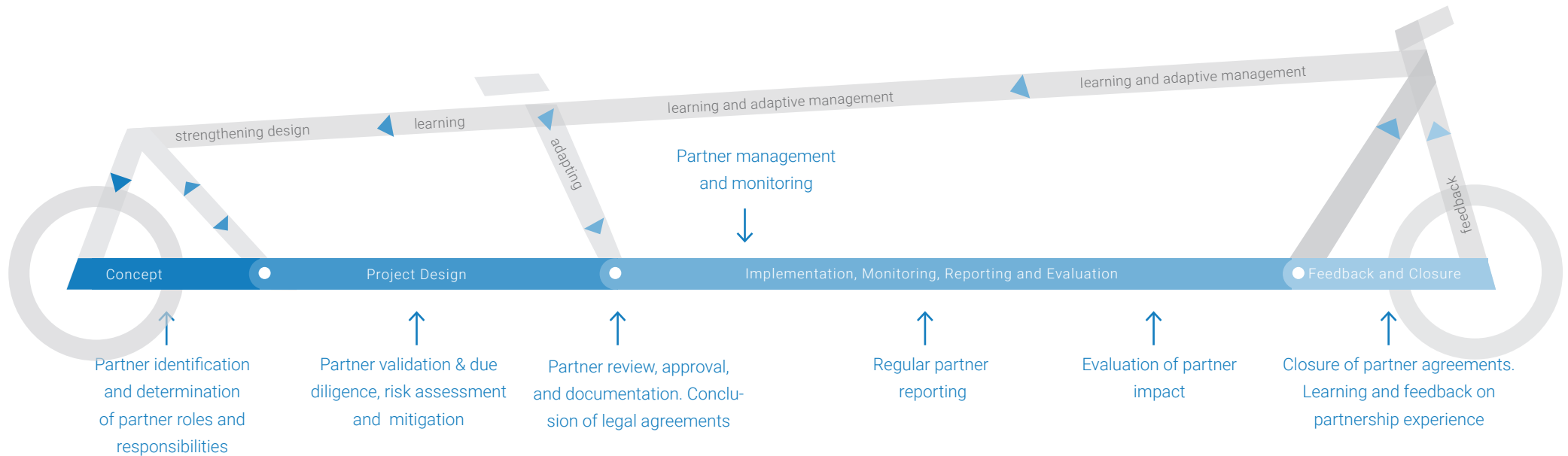
Procurement by Partners

The [UNEP Guidelines on the use of UNEP's Legal Instruments](#) allow for incidental procurement by Implementing Partners under SSFAs and PCAs, up to specific thresholds, this is described in the table below:

AGREEMENT TYPE	THRESHOLD FOR INCIDENTAL PROCUREMENT	PROCESS FOR PROCUREMENT ABOVE THRESHOLD
Small-Scale Funding Agreement (SSFA)	A SSFA allows for cumulative procurement activities that are required to execute one or more activities and that involve no more than 15% or USD 20,000, whichever is lower, of the budget. Up to this threshold the partner may follow their own internal procurement procedures.	Where a partnership involves procurement above the incidental procurement thresholds, the Project Manager/Task Manager should contact the Supply Chain Management Team, and the Programme Advisory Services Unit to and follow the rules and procedures prior to signing the relevant legal instrument with the Partner.
Programme Co-operation Agreement (PCA)	A PCA allows for cumulative procurement activities that are required to execute one or more activities and that involve no more than USD 40,000 of the budget. Up to this threshold the partner may follow their own internal procurement procedures.	The threshold for incidental procurement does not apply to GCF legal instruments due to the specific modalities and requirements applied for Green Climate Fund (GCF) projects.

UNHQ is developing a minimum standard Implementing Partnership agreement to be used by UN Secretariat entities. The procurement clauses will alter the thresholds for incidental procurement. For further information contact the [UNEP Legal Agreements Unit](#).

Partnerships and Project Cycle Management (PCM)



Key partnership activities and procedures during the Project Cycle include the following:

Project Concept Development and Project Design

Prospective partners have to be considered during stakeholder mapping and engagement processes as part of concept development and project design. This phase includes working with the stakeholders to determine how to involve them and at what level. Development of a project's Theory of Change (ToC) should in-

clude a focus on the role of partners in solving the issue at hand and workplan development provides the opportunity to identify partner responsibilities and determine what each partner will do. In the case of Implementation Partnerships, Outputs and Outcomes that the partner is accountable for delivering have to be identified and

agreed and documented in the Project Document (or GCF/GEF/AF project document format). The expected Outputs and Outcomes must be aligned with the objectives of the programme and sub-programme to which the partnership contributes.

Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting

Management and monitoring of implementing partners is a key element of good Results Based Management (RBM). The Project Team should closely monitor partner performance in accordance with the approaches described in Chapter 3: Project Cycle Management (PCM). This should include monitoring of the achievement of agreed Outputs and Outcomes, monitoring of risks identified during partners assessment, and financial monitoring and controls. Monitoring should take place through regular reporting by the partner(s), monitoring missions, and information gathering from stakeholders..

All medium scale or above risks identified during partner assessment, partner validation and due diligence must be entered into a partnership risk mitigation plan. All risks (major or minor) related to partnerships should be

included in the ProDoc (or relevant donor format) Risk Assessment Table.

For high-risk Implementing partners project staff should consider including arrangements for mandatory on-site performance and financial reviews, follow up and spot checks to mitigate delays in implementation and ensure accountability. Looking ahead, UMOJA extension 2 will include changes to how implementation partnerships are managed and governed in UNEP. Further guidance will be available from the Financial Management Service Section and Legal Unit of Corporate Services Division when necessary.

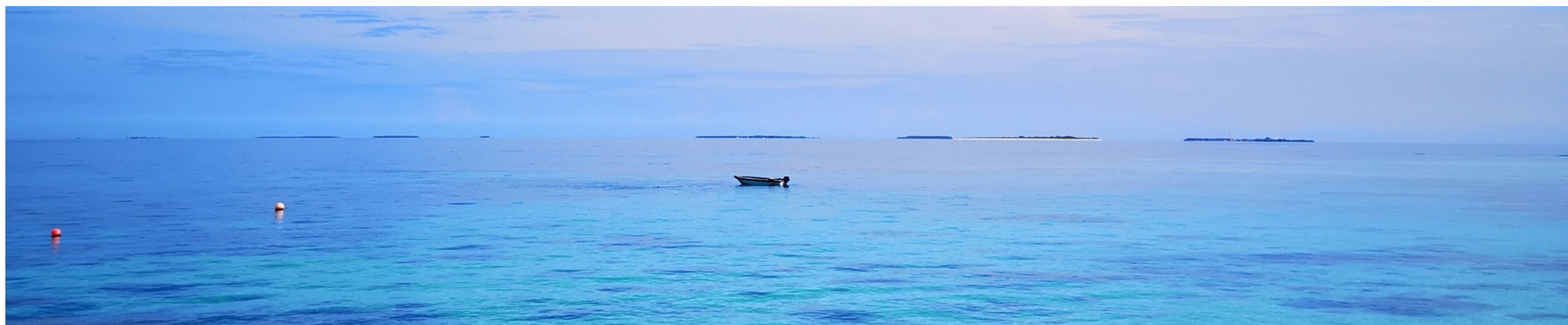
Project Closure

Partnership end dates are indicated in the relevant legal instrument used to formalize the partnership. Partner-

ships may be extended if the relevant UNEP and partner procedures are followed. Mechanisms for partnership suspension or termination are outlined in the relevant legal agreement.

The internal UNEP procedures that must be followed for partner identification, validation, due diligence, assessment, approval and documentation are described in detail in [UNEP's Partnership Policy and Procedures 2020](#).

This is the key reference document to be consulted when entering partnership(s) and provides detailed information on all the steps and procedures described in this chapter. It should be consulted in tandem to this manual when entering, managing, or closing out UNEP partnerships.



Partnership Procedures

Partner Validation and Due Diligence

At least some steps involved in partner validation are required for all prospective partners, regardless of the Partnership Modality identified. Partner validation takes place via the online [Partners Portal](#) and Due Diligence screening consists of evaluating the suitability of the prospective partner. The screening assesses the credentials of the proposed partner, in relation to human rights and gender equality, technical and strategic capacity to carry out project activities, current or previous experience with UNEP, audit concerns, and essential financial and administrative information, including procurement, and potential conflicts of interest. The procedures for partner validation and due diligence are described in detail in [UNEP's Partnership Policy and Procedures 2020](#). A summary of the steps, roles and responsibilities is described below:

Non-GCF/GEF/AF Projects Workflow

STEP	ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY
STEP 1	Project Manager/Developer	<p>Partner registration and categorisation: The Project Manager must submit official documentation showing the legal and financial status of the partner. This step applies to all partners and Partnership Modalities to varying degrees. For Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships, unless the relevant forum/platform/network has separate criteria, in which case those shall apply, this step should be completed.</p>
STEP 2	Project Manager/Developer	<p>Due Diligence Assessment: Due diligence must be conducted for partners engaged through Cooperation, Implementation and Donor Partnership Modalities, other than where the partner is a UN System Organisation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level one due diligence applies to Cooperation Partnerships. • Level two due diligence applies to Implementation and Donor Partnerships. <p>Due Diligence is completed through the UNEP Partners Portal. The Project Manager/Developer completes level 1 or level 2 due diligence assessment and notes any risks to be incorporated into future Partnership Assessment.</p>

STEP	ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY
STEP 2	Project Manager/Developer	The date(s) on which partner due diligence was completed needs to be described in the UNEP Project Document (ProDoc) before submission to the Project Review Committee (PRC).
STEP 3	Project Manager / Developer, and Division/Regional Director or Head of MEA	The Responsible Officer and Division/Regional Director must provide a declaration confirming no conflict of interest is present in conjunction with the due diligence assessment.
STEP 4	Private Sector Validating Office (Private Sector Unit, Governance and Affairs Division)	For-profit Partners only: The Private Sector Validating Office reviews the due diligence assessment to confirm that it has been conducted in accordance with UNEP requirements.
STEP 5	Designated Senior Officer (E.g.: Programme/Sub-programme Coordinator)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 2 Due Diligence only: A designated Senior Officer must review level 2 due diligence assessments and provide recommendations to the Division/Regional Director.
STEP 6	Division/Regional Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Division/Regional Director, endorses or rejects the entity. They may also request more information from the Project Manager/Developer prior to making a decision. • Partner Validation remains valid for three (3) years. Following expiry, if UNEP wishes to renew or continue its engagement with a previously validated partner, updates to the partner validation shall require a light touch review and should focus on changes and new information relating to the partner in question.

GCF/GEF/AF projects workflow

Since GCF, GEF and AF Partners are often indispensable for national implementation, the due diligence assessments are an entry point to capacity development, and not necessarily a selection tool. They are conducted for the purposes of understanding risks and putting in place mitigation measures to facilitate effective project delivery. Due diligence assessments are carried out as part of project preparation, and prior to project submission to the respective funds.

STEP	ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY
STEP 1	Task Manager	<p>The Task Manager conducts a level one due diligence assessment. Where the partner is a not-for-profit entity, they should also obtain a Declaration on Exclusion Criteria, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.</p> <p>The Declaration (where applicable) and due diligence assessment should be submitted as a component of the Concept Review Committee (CRC) documentation.</p>
STEP 2	Division/Regional Director or Head of MEA	<p>Submission to the CRC should include an indication from the relevant Division/Regional Director or Head of MEA endorsing the engagement with no, or minor, reservations, with major reservations, or rejecting the engagement.</p>
STEP 3	Task Manager	<p>In preparation for the Project Review Committee (PRC), the Task Manager conducts a level two due diligence assessment on the intended partner.</p> <p>Risks should be identified and recorded in Partnership Assessments, and where applicable, Risk Mitigation Plans should be prepared to enable effective engagement. The level two due diligence assessment, Partnership Assessment and Risk Mitigation Plan, (where applicable) are a component of the PRC documentation.</p>
STEP 4	Task Manager	<p>Following PRC, the project is submitted for approval to the relevant fund. If the project, and partner is approved, by the relevant fund, the Task Manager shall complete UNEP's Partner Categorisation and Registration processes via the Partners Portal.</p>

Partnership Assessment and Risk Mitigation Plans

For all Cooperation, Implementation and Donor Partnership Modalities the following workflow applies for partnership assessment and risk mitigation:

STEP	ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>STEP 1</p>	<p>Project Developer/Project Manager</p>	<p>Conduct a partnership assessment that considers the planned partnership activities from a risk perspective and includes consideration of the nature and duration of the proposed Partnerships,</p> <p>Risks relating to legal, financial, operational, technical, reputational, economic, political, organizational, environmental, and social aspects, including any specific risks related to breach of contract, ability to deliver outputs, safeguards, fraud, and corruption should be identified and assessed.</p> <p>All risks identified, including those identified during partner validation and due diligence, that are assessed as medium or above must be entered into a risk mitigation plan. For Implementing partners recognized as potentially high-risk, project staff should consider including arrangements for mandatory on-site performance and financial reviews, follow up and spot checks to mitigate delays in project implementation and ensure accountability.</p>
<p>STEP 2</p>	<p>Funds Management Officer</p>	<p>In the case of Implementation Partnerships, where the amount being transferred by UNEP to the partner exceeds USD\$200,000, the Project Developer/Manager must consult with the FMO/AO to determine whether there are any additional risks which require assessment and mitigation, including searching the online Partners Portal to check if UNEP has previously worked with the entity and if any risks were identified.</p>
<p>STEP 3</p>	<p>Senior Officer (E.g.: Programme/Sub-programme Coordinator)</p>	<p>The risk mitigation plan must be reviewed by a Senior Officer. The Senior Officer should not be someone who is not directly involved in the project or intended partnership and should ensure that the risk assessment and Risk Mitigation Plan have been completed objectively.</p>
<p>STEP 4</p>	<p>Division/Regional Director</p>	<p>The risk mitigation plan must be submitted to the Division/Regional Director for review and feedback.</p>

Other than for GCF, GEF and AF projects, Partnership Assessments relating to Partnerships with not-for-profit Partners, which lead to a Risk Mitigation Plan, must be submitted to the Partnership Committee for consideration. Furthermore, all Partnerships with for-profit Partners engaged through a Cooperation or Donor Partnership Modality, regardless of whether the Partnership Assessment requires a Risk Mitigation Plan, shall be submitted to the Partnership Committee for consideration

Partnership Committee Review

UNEP’s Partnership Committee’s mandate is to review and assess Partnership Assessments and Risk Mitigation Plans for partners and partnerships presenting medium and above risks.

UNEP’s Partnership Committee must review all prospective partnerships that fall into the following categories:

- i. All for-profit partners engaged through a Cooperation Modality or Donor Partnership Modality
- ii. Not-for-profit partners pursuing a Cooperation Modality or Implementation Partnership Modality where the partnership assessment (see above) resulted in the requirement of a risk mitigation plan

Review by UNEP’s Partnership Committee is not required for governmental and intergovernmental partners, UN system organizations, or partnerships funded through GCF/GEF/AF projects.

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY
Project Manager/ Developer	Creates the Partner in the Partners Portal.
Partnerships Committee	The Partnership Committee reviews partnerships on an as needed basis. Consider Partnership Assessments and Risk Mitigation Plans (where applicable) and provide a recommendation to the Division/Regional Director, as to whether a Partnership should be endorsed or rejected.

Approval of Partnerships

For Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships, partners are approved based on the processes applicable to the specific/forum/platform/network. For GCF/GEF/AF projects, partnerships are approved during the respective fund's own project approval process (see chapter 3 – Project Cycle Management). For Cooperation Partnerships, Implementations Partnerships and Donor Partnerships, the following roles and responsibilities apply:

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY
Senior Officer	The Senior Officer makes recommendations and/or provides feedback to Divisional/Regional Director during the approval step.
Divisional/Regional Director	<p>The Division/Regional Director maintains the final authority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• to approve and to authorize partnerships• to stop or to block the process <p>The Division/Regional Director endorses or rejects the partnership based on the due diligence and partnership assessment results, and strength of the risk mitigation plan, along with recommendations from the Senior Officer and Partnership Committee. This authority is documented in the partnerships' section of the 2019 Delegation of Authority Policy and Framework.</p>