

**IMPLEMENTATION OF MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS
INTERACTIVE ONLINE COURSE**

Focus: Southern Africa Development Community (SADC)

Evaluation Report
December 12, 2022

Context

The Law Division at UNEP and School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs at Northeastern University organized a fourth Online Course on implementing Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs). The course focused on Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and followed the model established by the first, second, and third iterations. East Africa and the Gambia (East Africa) course took place in November-December 2020, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) course occurred in November-December 2021 and the Southeast Asia course was carried out in February 2022. SADC course brought together government representatives from several countries to discuss the implementation of MEAs and share best practices and challenges that they experience in their role as practitioners.

Content

The course comprised eight modules:

1. Introduction
2. General aspects of MEAs and policy processes
3. MEAs as key policy instruments at national and global level
4. Implementation of chemicals & waste conventions
5. Implementation of biodiversity-related conventions
6. Determinants of implementation and synergies among conventions: synergies within clusters
7. Determinants of implementation and synergies among conventions: synergies across the clusters of MEAs
8. Conclusion and next steps towards the community of practice

The course met over three weeks: first two weeks on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, and the last week on Monday and Wednesday. The course started on October 24, 2022 and ended on November 9, 2022. In addition to synchronous sessions, the team at the Northeastern University created an online platform through Canvas featuring all the course contents (videos, documents, and additional resources) and a forum space for participants to share ideas.

Participants

Registration for the course was under direct UNEP management. Initially, 56 participants registered, of which 26 actively¹ engaged in the synchronous sessions.

Among the 26 active participants, 12 were women and 14 were men. Active participants were from South Africa (11), Mozambique (6), Botswana (3), Namibia (3) and Zimbabwe (3). While both thematic clusters - biodiversity and chemicals and waste - were represented, more than half of active participants work on chemicals and waste with several people covering more than one MEA across clusters.

Similar to previous iterations of the course, the organizers ensured the direct involvement of representatives of the MEA Secretariats and participants indicated that it was beneficial for the discussion and capacity building process. As a result, officers from the BRS, Minamata, CITES, CBD, Ramsar, and CMS Secretariats attended several sessions and engaged in fruitful discussions with participants on reporting, implementation, and supporting tools available for countries.

At the end of the course, the organizers administered a voluntary survey to collect feedback from participants about the course, its contents, methodology, and possibilities for further work at the regional and global levels. The survey contained ten questions related to the feedback on the course, and four additional questions related to further establishing a follow up and communication network. A total of twenty-six (26) responses were received, including twenty (20) from active participants. Six (6) additional responses came from participants who attended less than 4 sessions.

Assessment Results

The survey results evidence the extent to which the course achieved its main objectives and contributed to articulating the role of MEAs and their domestication into national policies and strategies. Additionally, the survey allowed for cross-comparison with the previous cohorts of participants and identified common patterns in implementation. In general, the perception of the course's fourth iteration was as positive as the first three, showing improvement with each additional iteration. Expressly, 96% of the participants from SADC region (comparing to 90% of the participants from Southeast Asia, 85% of the MENA cohort and 80% of the participants from East Africa cohort) agreed that the course was useful for governments and for them as individuals to learn more about the role of MEAs and national progress on their implementation. In addition, 85% of the participants (compared to 90% of East Africa and Southeast Asia and 93% of the MENA cohorts) considered their national implementation report accurate. And 42% (comparing to 53% of the Southeast Asia, 67% of East Africa and 64% of the MENA cohorts) considered the implementation reports provided one of the most valuable parts of the course for their learning and analysis. Slightly lower numbers for SADC region in accuracy perception and value of national implementation report can be explained by a higher proportion of technical experts not directly involved in reporting among SADC course participants. Notably, 100% of the participants agreed

¹ By active engagement we mean attendance of at least 4 out of 8 sessions (50% and higher).

that they would recommend this course to other focal points in their countries or colleagues from other countries.

Furthermore, the survey also asked what participants considered the main factors that could help them improve the implementation of MEAs and those that would facilitate national reporting (See Table 1 and Table 2). Lack of funding and poor training and capacity building, followed by the gravity of the environmental problems and the low availability of scientific information data are the most important challenges that participants from SADC face. While poor capacity and lack of training and lack of finances are also main challenges faced by the participants from both the East Africa and MENA regions, gravity of environmental problems and low availability of data are key concerns in Southeast Asia. Participants identified two factors as critical to improving implementation across all four regions: 1) increased technical assistance (including data collection and training) - 100% of Southeast Asia, 91% of East Africa, 86% of MENA and 69% of the SADC cohorts, and 2) increased financial assistance – 91% of East Africa, 81% of SADC, 79% of MENA and 73% of Southeast Asia cohorts. In addition, participants from SADC identified two factors specific to their region: a stronger commitment from national institutions, 77%, (also a high priority for Southeast Asia, 77%) and greater participation in convention negotiations, 69% (also a high priority for East Africa, 64%).

Table 1. Main factors that would improve implementation (respondents pick up to 5)

Answer Choices	East Africa	MENA	Southeast Asia	SADC
Greater participation in convention negotiations	14 (64%)	8 (57%)	10 (45%)	18 (69%)
Increased technical assistance (including data collection and training)	20 (91%)	12 (86%)	22 (100%)	18 (69%)
Increased financial assistance	20 (91%)	11 (79%)	16 (73%)	21 (81%)
Improved engagement from convention secretariats (including stronger enforcement mechanisms)	7 (32%)	3 (21%)	7 (32%)	13 (50%)
Stronger commitment from national institutions	13 (59%)	6 (43%)	17 (77%)	20 (77%)
Stronger leadership from individuals working on the implementation of MEAs	9 (41%)	5 (36%)	15 (68%)	11 (42%)
Existence of assessment and evaluation mechanisms	9 (41%)	4 (29%)	11 (50%)	14 (54%)
Feedback from convention secretariats on the national report	9 (41%)	10 (71%)	5 (23%)	7 (27%)
Total responses	22	14	22	26

The top two factors that emerged as key to assisting the national reporting process in all four regions are 1) increased technical support and training to produce the reports identified by 93%

of MENA, 92% of SADC, 82% of East Africa, and 77% of Southeast Asia respondents, and 2) more availability of information identified by 91% of Southeast Asia, 81% of SADC, 71% of MENA and 68% of East Africa respondents. Additionally, increased financial support to produce reports and clearer questions in the report are important factors to improve national reporting for participants from SADC.

Notably, while pointing out that financial support is important, neither of the four regions ranked it as the top concern. Instead, technical assistance and training are the most critical needs countries encounter. It is a significant finding that the UNEP and School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs can use to inform further work.

Table 2. Main factors that would facilitate national reporting (respondents pick up to 5)

Answer Choices	East Africa	MENA	Southeast Asia	SADC
Lower frequency of reports	0 (0%)	2 (14%)	2 (9%)	3 (12%)
Clearer questions in the report	9 (41%)	7 (50%)	13 (59%)	16 (62%)
Increased technical support and training to produce reports	18 (82%)	13 (93%)	17 (77%)	24 (92%)
Increased financial support to produce reports	17 (77%)	8 (57%)	8 (36%)	16 (62%)
More availability of information	15 (68%)	10 (71%)	20 (91%)	21 (81%)
Stronger incentives and enforcement from secretariats of the national reporting obligation	9 (41%)	7 (50%)	9 (41%)	15 (58%)
Specific use and feedback from secretariats on reports	11 (50%)	5 (36%)	13 (59%)	8 (31%)
Availability of electronic reporting systems	8 (36%)	6 (43%)	9 (41%)	11 (42%)
Design of joint reports for conventions clusters	10 (45%)	5 (36%)	9 (41%)	8 (31%)
Total responses	22	14	22	26

Creating a Follow-up and Communication Network

One of the key suggestions from the participants in all four cohorts was to create a network for the communication and exchange of knowledge and experience on MEA implementation. Some SADC participants recommended follow up meetings to learn how participants applied knowledge gained during the course, and other suggestions included in-person trainings and mechanism for sharing of best-practices. The results from the survey also show that overwhelming majority of respondents (more than 85% from each cohort) indicated that they were interested in creating a larger alumni network, and all four cohorts supported the idea of creating a website portal as a main platform for further engagement.

Course delivery team from the univeristy's side

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