

● **Recommendation 4.**
Elevate the environment within the multilateral system.

The central importance of the environment to all aspects of our lives and collective well-being must be accompanied by an elevation of the environment within our global governance system. This requires strengthening UNEP and the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) with mandates and resources comparable to the United Nations' development, peace and security, and human rights institutions. Specifically, **UNEP should be empowered to act as a more effective global environment agency**, able to track our interrelated impacts on the environment, consolidate and measure our commitments, condition our global financial investments, and drive a transformative agenda for people and planet across multilateralism.

In line with the above principles of effective multilateralism, and to build a global environmental governance system that can deliver a just, green transition, UNEP and UNEA could be elevated and strengthened along the following lines:

➤ **A bolstered monitoring/accountability role.** To uphold the newly recognized right to a healthy, clean, sustainable environment, UNEP and UNEA should be provided with a special rapporteur group possessing mandates to investigate and report publicly on environmental violations. These bodies should be mandated to issue more regular public reporting on the gaps between international commitments and current trends, including those related to carbon emissions, pollution, and encroachments on protected sea and land areas.

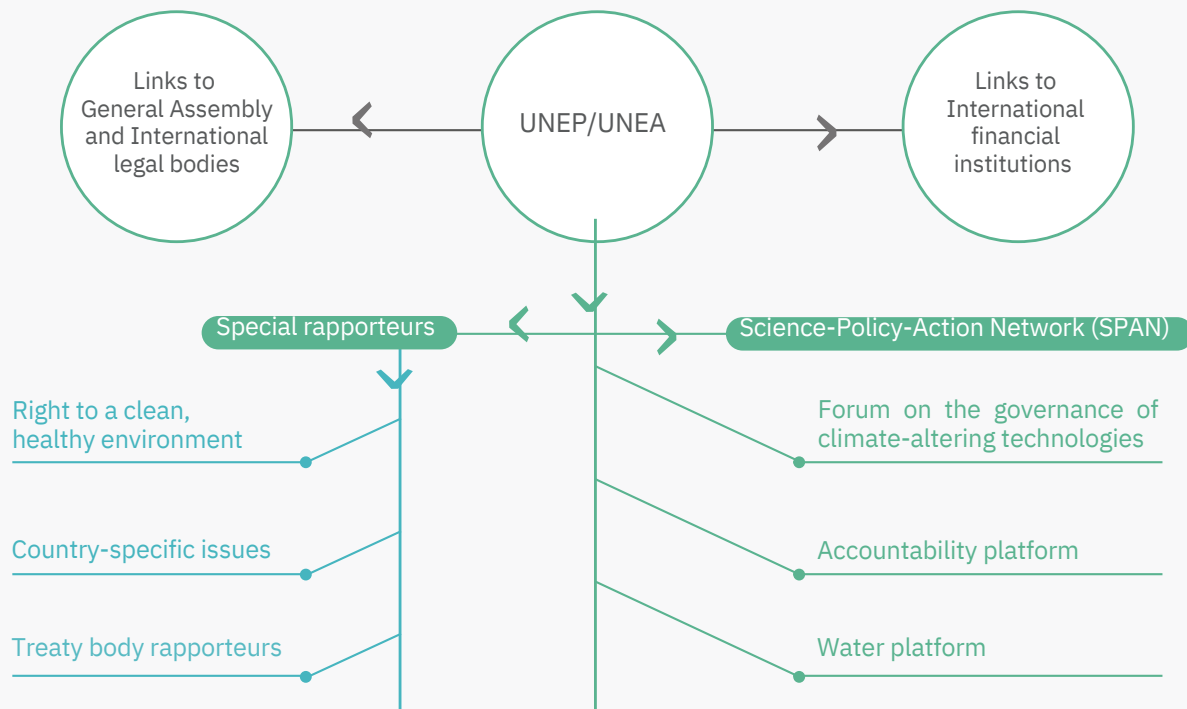
➤ **Integration with the international financial system.** One of the major shortcomings of today's environmental governance system is its lack of integration. Whereas organizations like WIPO, ILO, and the World Health Organization (WHO) have the mandates and ability to integrate across all relevant sectors, UNEP and UNEA are only loosely linked with a range of unrelated environmental instruments scattered across different legal and administrative bodies. Providing UNEP and UNEA with an advisory role for the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) would help to integrate their work with the global financial system. This

link could be achieved by agreeing on the set of environmental conditions that international finance would follow when providing resources.

➤ **A Science-Policy-Action Network for the planet.** UNEP should be resourced with a Science-Policy-Action Network (SPAN) to consolidate information regarding the triple planetary crisis into a coherent, constantly updated, actionable assessment of risks to the planet. Such a body could act as a policy clearing house to draw from existing bodies and generate recommended actions for governments and non-State actors in real time. The SPAN would issue reports on horizon scanning and strategic foresight; trace environmental impacts, including on climate-driven security risks; use behavioural science to generate global shifts in our policies and practices; and offer clear, actionable recommendations for policymakers. Its mandate could include country-specific reports based on national commitments, a facility to feed into policy decision-making, and resources to build adaptation and green technological capacities in developing countries. Drawing on models like the Climate Trace initiative, the SPAN could track a broader range of environmentally harmful activities, including pollution of air, water, soil, and the seas; deforestation; desertification; destruction of protected habitats; safe production of critical minerals for renewable technologies; and violations of international environmental commitments.

➤ **A public accountability platform for our planetary commitments.** Across the major environmental conventions, signatories should be held publicly accountable for their commitments and supported in their efforts to reach the core goals of net-zero carbon emissions, biodiversity protection and restoration, and a pollution-free planet. This could be achieved by establishment of a UNEP-supported platform containing publicly available information, capacity-building for developing countries, information-sharing around best practices, and an annual reporting requirement to the General Assembly for all conventions.

Global Environmental Governance System



› **A platform for water diplomacy.** Water is at the heart of the people/planet relationship and is a key aspect of many peace efforts around the world. Improving the global governance of water is crucial to addressing the triple planetary crisis and achieving the SDGs. Unfortunately, today's governance regime is outdated, fragmented, and unable to keep pace with the fast-moving trends affecting water worldwide. Building on the Global Commission on the Economics of Water, an inclusive platform for water diplomacy should be established, offering a safe, neutral space to exchange on a wide range of water-related issues, including infrastructure (hydropower), water-sharing, combating water pollution, and safeguarding the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation. Such a platform should avoid reinforcing existing fragmentation of water governance, instead drawing on existing initiatives and resources, and could be included within a strengthened UNEP structure to ensure global coherence.

› **A forum on the governance of climate-altering technologies.** Recent reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have made clear that, absent far more radical changes to our economies, we are headed well beyond the 1.5-degree threshold. This has led some to consider a range of climate-altering technologies, including large-scale ongoing efforts at Carbon Dioxide Removal (CDR). More speculative and potentially dangerous technologies like Solar Radiation Modification (SRM) are also being considered by some actors, though there is widespread scientific consensus that the risks of SRM are far too great to proceed without significant further research based on the precautionary principle. A strengthened UNEP could better support dialogue on the governance of climate-altering technologies, drawing on a global network of scientific experts, and with a commitment from Member States to shape policies based on their findings.

- › **A global hub for the conservation, preservation, and dissemination of Indigenous knowledge, and its inclusion in policymaking processes.** Establishment of such a hub supported by UNEP would expand from UNESCO's Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems programme, and the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform under the umbrella of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which helps to amplify Indigenous voices and facilitate their participation in climate negotiation processes.
- › **Advancing environmental rights within the multilateral system.** The 2022 General Assembly resolution on the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment was a watershed moment demonstrating broad recognition of the central importance of the planet to the multilateral agenda. In the event of conflict between this right and profit-motivated exploitation of natural resources, the human right to a clean, healthy, sustainable environment should prevail. To this end, international investment law should be realigned to avoid undermining the climate and environment goals in the Paris Agreement. The right to a clean, healthy, sustainable environment, however, carries no legal weight unless it is attached to judicial bodies at the international and national levels. Our proposal for an elevation of the environment within the multilateral system could be accompanied by specific steps to consolidate environmental rights within our current and future systems, some of which could include: (i) modernizing the International Court of Justice to better address global environmental issues; (ii) codifying the human right to a clean, healthy, sustainable environment in a new international treaty, or in a protocol to an existing treaty body; (iii) inclusion of ecocide in the statute of the International Criminal Court; or (iv) a call for all Member States to codify the right to a clean, healthy, sustainable environment in their national laws. Some of these efforts could be led by the newly created Envoy for Future Generations, linking environmental rights to normative and legal obligations to future generations.