

Early Warning for Environment (EWE) Workshop

Co-creating a Strategy for One UN Common Approach to EWE



UN
environment
programme



Photo credit: iStock.com / pilipphoto

Strengthen the environmental dimension of Early Warning for All to minimize risks of disasters and hazards from triple planetary crises

20-21 November 2023, International Environment House, Geneva, Switzerland (Hybrid)

Summary

This Early Warning for Environment Workshop was organized by UNEP and held in the International Environment House, Geneva, Switzerland (Hybrid), from 20 to 21 November 2023. It was attended by 11 other UN Agencies and 6 MEAs (UNEP, UNDP, UNDRR, IFRC, WMO, FAO, WHO, WMO, OHCHR, UNDESA, OCHA, ITU, CBD, Ramsar and BRS). The workshop was to discuss and agree on a draft strategy of Early Warning for Environment that would enable all participating organizations to work together complementarily so that we can proceed further to engage member states and stakeholders at UNEA6 Feb 2024.

Key strategic outcomes of this workshop include:

- All participants agreed that Early Warning for Environment covering pollution and waste, nature and biodiversity loss, cascading effects of triple planetary crisis and their impacts on SDGs, is a new and complementary dimension of EW4ALL initially focusing on climate change.
- All participating agencies and MEAs agreed to work together to co-create the strategy for Early Warning for Environment, aiming to forge One UN common Approach to the initiative.
- Participants discussed and agreed on the conceptual framework and key components of EWE strategy, including but not limited to the scope, system and phased approach, short- and long-term thinking, taking data, knowledge and solutions as foundations for early warning, and focus on risk reduction and preparedness.

Inger Anderson, Executive Director of UNEP, in her opening remarks, defined the niche and scope of Early Warning for Environment, complementing Early Warning for All on climate change, and together as UN system approach to reduce risks of triple planetary crises. Mr. Haoliang Xu, Associate Administrator UNDP, in his closing remarks supported UNEP's leadership on this new initiative and called for the UN to work together and at scale. Many senior representatives of other agencies and MEAs spoke to express their support and solidarity.

This workshop was based on the result of the last inception workshop on Early Warning for Environment held in Nairobi UNEP headquarters in early July 2023. It was the start of a co-creation process to develop a portfolio of Early Warning for Environment as a complementing dimension to Early Warning for All, focusing on climate change and launched by the UNSG. It was agreed that the scope of Early Warning for Environment includes pollution and waste, nature and biodiversity loss, cascading effects of triple planetary crises and their impact on SDGs. Like-minded UN agencies and MEAs supporting the UN common approach to pollution-free action and biodiversity conservation participated in this workshop, including UNEP, WMO, FAO and WHO, plus three MEAs, CCD, CBD and BRS.

Group of 18 UN Partners, 12 Agencies and 6 MEAs, with one UN Common Approach to EWE

- **12 UN Agencies:** UNEP, UNDP, UNDRR, IFRC, WMO, FAO, WHO, WMO, IOM, OHCHR, UNDESA, OCHA, ITU.
- **6 MEAs:** CBD, Ramsar, BRS and UNCCD
- **Across UNEP,** including Ecosystems Division, Industry and Economy Division, Policy and Programming Division and the Chief Digital Officer

Key agreements of the Workshop

- All the 12 UN agencies and 3 MEAs agreed to work together on Early Warning for Environment (EWE), and its anchor to EA4All supporting actions, to tackle the Triple Planetary Crisis together.
- Action points after the workshop include further consultation on the draft strategy with governments and other stakeholders during the next session UN Environment Assembly (UNEA6 in February 2024), further communication to the EMG and HLCP, and other advocating activities in 2024. Meanwhile, pilot projects shall start as soon as possible to test the water and demonstrate its value-added contributions to disaster risk reduction from pollution and biodiversity loss.
- Agreed on the scope of EWE: Pollution, Biodiversity Loss, Cascading risks of triple planetary crises, and their Impacts and Risks on SDGs. In detail, it agreed **EWE focus on 4 critical Pathways**.
- EW on **Pollution** (Upstream & Downstream Pollution – **Whole Processes Monitoring/Early Warning from source to impacts**);- *Most polluted countries are in the Asia Pacific and Africa regions.*
- EW on **Nature and Biodiversity Loss - All major drivers count**; – direct and indirect drivers of GBF framework, including 23 targets) – *Most happening biodiversity loss is in Latin America, with 94% since 1970. The biodiversity loss has been happening in other areas since 1970: Africa with 65%, Asia Pacific is 45%, North America 33%, Europe and Central Asia is 24%.*
- EW on **Impacts of Climate Change/Pollution/Biodiversity Loss and their inter-linkages and cascading risks**;
- **Early Warning for Environment is critical to meet SDGs 2030 and Living in Harmony with Nature 2050.**
- Agreed on a Conceptual Framework, with a List of Priorities and Quick Wins (low-hanging fruits) to work together, such as air pollution, geospatial info services.
- Mapping out activities across the UN system on EWE for one UN Common Approach of actions with division of labour and complementarities.
- Anticipatory approach to focusing on preparedness and risks reduction,
- Complementing functions of EWE to EW4ALL to tackle triple planetary crises,
- Building up approach on existing activities rather than reinventing the wheel,
- Cascading effects and synergies, together with EW4ALL,
- Short term and long-term early warning services using data analytics, assessments and solutions options;
- Sequence of priorities, low-hanging fruits and work together at scale,
- Use of cutting age technologies including digital technologies,
- Capacity building and community-based participatory approach,

Outline

Introduction (Concept Note attached), EWE, One UN Common Approach to Pollution and Biodiversity Loss Need to develop the EWE with three entry points and support them in return.

Flow of the Programme, opening remarks, focuses of discussions (Agenda attached)

Consensus Built/Outcomes: Overarching Conceptual Framework and Architecture, UN Common Approach to EWE, and its 4 Critical Pathways (Pollution, Biodiversity Loss, Cascading risks, implications on SDGs2030; priorities and low-hanging fruits).

Next steps and follow up actions with timelines.

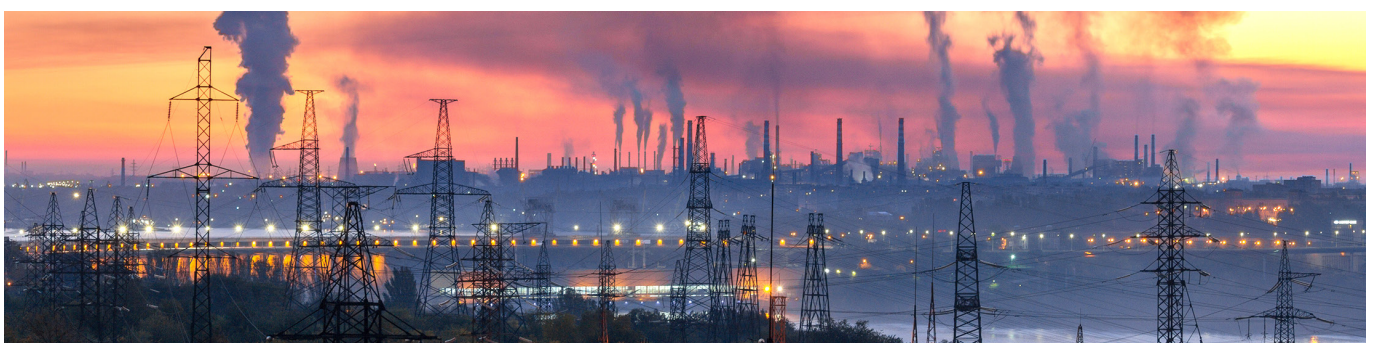


Photo credit: iStock.com / Alexey Tolmachov

Introduction

Early Warning for Environment held on 20-21, November 2023, UNEP Europe Regional Office, Geneva, Switzerland (Hybrid). The objective of the workshop was a CO-CREATION OF A STRATEGY FOR EWE-Strengthening the environmental dimension of Early Warning towards accelerating the Achievement of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), aiming to bring 12 UN Agencies and 6 MEAs together to discuss the EWE and see how UN Agencies and MEAs can collaborate together to tackle the triple planetary crisis, to contribute to the One UN Common Approach to Biodiversity Loss and Pollution. - Further information, please see Concept Note attached.

Opening Remarks by:

Inger Andersen, Executive Director, UNEP

ASG Bernardo Mariano Junior for UN OICT

Caroline HOLT – Director of Disasters, Climate and Crises for the IFRC

Li FENG – Director of Land and Water Division for the FAO

Luca Rossi – Senior Coordination Officer of EW4All, UNDRR in representation of PAOLA Albrito

Closing Remarks by:

Haoliang Xu -Associate Administrator for the UNDP

Two Days of Discussion Topics:

Day 1:

Discussion of the Proposed Strategy Components and Extensive discussions from Partners about Strategy on Early Warning for Environment, including but not limited to below, For instance:

Early Warning for Nature and Biodiversity Loss – UNEP, CBD, UNDP, FAO, UNEP WCMC, UNCCD, UNOICT, ITU, UNDESA.

One UN Common Approach for Division of Labour and complementarities of Early Warning for Environment and Identification of comparative advantages and roles of participating organizations.

Early Warning for Environment: Pollution, Nature and Biodiversity loss, for instance:

- Early Warning for Air Pollution – UNEP, WMO, FAO, WHO, UNOICT, ITU, UNDESA
- Early Warning for Water Pollution – UNEP, UNDP, WMO, UNOICT, ITU, UNDESA
- Early Warning for Soil Pollution - UNEP, UNDP, FAO, WHO, UNOICT, ITU, UNDESA
- Early Warning for Marine Pollution – UNEP, WMO, IOM, OCHA, IFRC, UNOICT, ITU, UNDESA
- Early Warning for Chemical Waste Pollution – UNEP, BRS, WHO, UNDP, UNOICT, ITU, UNDESA

Discussion of cascading effects of triple planetary crises, and their Impacts and Risks on SDGs and how to achieve living in harmony with nature in 2050:

- Climate Change and Pollution Interlinkages
- Pollution and Biodiversity Loss Interlinkages
- Climate change and Biodiversity Loss Interlinkages
- Climate Change, Pollution and Biodiversity Loss Interlinkages

Day 2:

To present and recap the discussed agreed on a Strategy of EWE, Definition and Conceptual Framework, division of labour and complementarities on EWE to apply One UN-wide approach.

Discussion on Impacts on the Ground, with Regional and Country Case Studies.

Discuss a Roadmap and conclude the short and long-term Strategy and agree on strategy of Early Warning for Environment with Priorities.

Discussion on Early Warning for Biodiversity in the Latin America and Caribbean Region and Asia Pacific Region (potential Quick Win).

Division of Labour and how to work together on Early Warning for Air Pollution in Africa and Asia Pacific and the Early Warning for Biodiversity in the Latin America and Caribbean Region and Asia Pacific Region.

Key Outcomes

1. **EWE will be a complementary to Early Warning for All (EW4ALL) Initiative**, applying three entry points as frameworks to tackle the **Triple Planetary Crisis**, with **one UN Common Approach** (systematic approach) to **Pollution and Waste, Nature and Biodiversity loss**.
2. **Agreed EWE will be launched at UNEA 6 from 26 February to 1 March 2024.**
3. **It was agreed the EWE will be developed and implemented in four phases within the following high-level Roadmap and Strategic Implementation Plan:**
 - Preparation Phase 2023-2024 (Launch EWE at UNEA 6 February 2024)
 - Development and Implemented Phase (2024-2026)
 - Further Implemented phase (2026-2027) – Alignment with Early Warning for ALL
 - Scaling up and Monitoring Phase (2027-2030)
 - Building Up Phase – beyond 2030(2030-2050)
4. **Early Warning for Environment Initiative** will work together with groups and partners, applying one UN common approach to biodiversity and pollution, tackling the planetary crisis-climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss and agree to apply the existing frameworks as entry points:
 - One UN Common approach to Biodiversity with 50 Ways activities (UN CEB 2021)
 - Montreal- Kunming Global Biodiversity (COP15 CBD 2022)
 - Implementation Plan- Pollution Free-Planet (UNEA4 2019)
 - An overview of UN Activities and Initiatives related to Pollution (EMG 2023)
5. **Geospatial Data and Environment Data Platforms**, as enablers will apply for the crucial role in the Early Warning for Environment, and UNEP WESR will be widely part of this activity, since the availability of timely, quality, and disaggregated data is critical for accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (SDGs2030).
 - Data is fundamental for the Early Warning for Environment services, at the local, sub-national and national levels. The existing platform is in the process of establishing and monitoring and observation systems. USING DATA at country level for REDUCING RISK.
 - Take use of existing data, break the silos and suggest crosscutting approaches.
 - The need to have an 'Early Warning for Environment' a permanent Monitoring and Evaluation function and capacity development at the national, regional, and global level.
6. **Mapping the VALUE CYCLE and different stakeholders**, including the upstream and downstream value chains and identify the beneficiaries of the EWE.
7. Need to do the Risk Assessments and collaboration with Resident Coordinator Offices and Technical assistance and capacity building – regional centres.
8. Accident prevention and preparedness for hazardous waste and chemicals emergencies. From Science to Action, International cooperation.
9. Generate reliable and adequate facts to support reliable and actable early warning for pollution control. Under the category of slow onset disasters, chronic accumulation of chemicals can remain invisible for decades and cause significant negative impacts (e.g. DDT and its impact on pollinators and ecosystem functions). Slow onset hazards are really seen until damages are made.
10. Holistic approaches connecting chemicals, ecosystem services, pollution and health are key for risk assessment and disaster prevention.
11. Trace back to the reasons behind and the quantitative corresponding relationship among various factors.
12. Trade and environment – custom codes, PIC and notification procedures.
13. Illegal trade and traffic – ENFORCE.

Points of Reflection for the Co-creation of a Strategy for:

- Gaps on slow onset and environmental degradation impacts on movement.
- Diverse levels of digital maturity and data collection/analysis capacity.
- Different types of hazards and therefore timeline (compared to EW4ALL and weather-based forecasting).
- Expectation setting for long term initiative with key government stakeholders.
- Different relationship to movement.
- Types of pollution combined with types of Hazards.
- Focus on Risk Assessments, Value Chain from Impacts – Assessments.
- Risk Assessment Tools: Scenarios and Impact Assessment.
- Value Chain connecting immediate short term with Long Term Impacts.
- Synthesize and Prioritize.
- Interlinkages between Rapid onset hazards and Slow Onset Hazards.
- Anticipating risk with ready/rapid-response solutions especially for rapid onset hazards.

Next Steps and Follow up Actions

- To refine and revise the agreed Conceptual Framework and Overarching Architecture, in the end of July 2023.
- Early warning for environment will be further consulted with the major stakeholders (member states, private sector, civil society) at **UNEA6 2024**.
- The division of labour, road map and strategy of the Early Warning for Environment will be shared after receiving all comments from participants **of the workshop and UNEA6 2024**.
- The Executive of the UN agencies and MEAs were invited for **UNEA6 2024**.
- Detailed Implementation Plan will be discussed at the proposed the future workshop in October 2024.
- All of the above actions will have to be done before Mid of November 2024, so that it can ensure to announce the **EWE at COP 29, 2024**.

Technical Agreed Follow-up Actions

- Integrate the 'Early Warning for Environment' into the Implementation Plan-Pollution Free Planet on Pollution (Early Warning for Air Pollution in Africa and Asia Pacific regions) and UN Common Approach to Biodiversity Loss (Nature and Biodiversity Loss in Latin America region).
- Capacity development and technology capacity development are critical for the Early Warning for Environment function, even more relevant at the national, sub-national and local levels.
- Implement Actions on the Ground through partnerships, in particular the RESIDENT COORDINATOR OFFICES (and the UNSDCF network).
- Define to WHOM and WHEN and Build a Catalogue of Products and Services.
- How to configure EWE for producing IMPACTS for ANTICIPATORY ACTION in countries.
- Consider some nexus streams of work, between EWE and Human Rights and between Early Warning for the Environment and Conflicts and Peace and Security.
- Early Warning for the Environment can build on the rich mandates of the different partners to expand the reach of its impact beyond the triple planetary crisis and on synergies at different levels of governance.

Widen the existing Working Group 18 (12 UN Agencies + 6 MEAs), especially with UN EMGs:

- The existing working group of 15 will be widened with relevant UN agencies and MEAs on Early Warning for Environment, e.g, UNHCR, UNESCO and Convention of Chemical Waste.
- Identify the Networks of Partners through the existing organizations and their Networks and Alliance.



data.unep.org/earlywarning

Early Warning and Data Analytics | Strategy, Policy and Action for People, Places and Planet
33 Partners in the One Global Partnership and 40 UN Agencies in the ECOSOC UN Geospatial Network



UN
environment
programme

data.unep.org

OTHER ONE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP PARTNERS

| UNEP GRID-Geneva | UNEP GRID-Warsaw | GRID-Sioux Falls | GRID-Nairobi | GRID-Azores | Environment Agency - ABU DHABI | RADI | AiR Centre | SPREP | UNEP WCMC | Yale University |
| NASA | ESA Copernicus | Google | IBM | Descartes | UN System (OICT, DESA-UNSD, UN-GGIM, FAO, WMO, WHO, UNDP) | GEO | European Association Citizen Science | US Association of Citizen Science |

Contact: alexandre.caldas@un.org

Transforming the lives of People, Places and Planet