

A Future for Planetary Health and Human Wellbeing 2050

UNEP Regional
Foresight Workshop,
Latin America and
the Caribbean LAC

SUMMARY REPORT

Bogota D.C., Colombia. December 4-5, 2023.

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Introduction

UNEP's strategic foresight initiative aims to establish an institutionalised approach to the foresight and horizon scanning. The goal is to develop an anticipatory and future-oriented culture, recognizing that tackling the global systemic challenges we face requires integrating forward-looking knowledge and insights across disciplines, knowledge systems, and sectors of society.

The process comprises two distinct steps. The first was at the global level, bringing together a Foresight Expert Panel to interpret, analyse, cluster, and provide insights into the potential for disruption following an analysis of 29 emerging changes and over 1000 signals of change identified from a horizon scan survey. Following this global analysis, a series of regional workshops were held to review the global outputs to provide necessary regional perspectives to validate and adjust the initial identification of emerging signals of change and provide information on regionally specific issues, risks, and opportunities.

The Chatham House Rule ran the 2-day workshop in LAC. It consisted of a series of facilitated breakout sessions during which participants discussed emerging changes in the context of the four UNEP scenarios (The Sustainability Paradox, Post-Truth Division, Fortress Multipolarity, and Global Awakening) and shared their views on possible pathways through which those scenarios could hypothetically materialize and reflected on how this could affect the transition towards a sustainable future of improved planetary health and human wellbeing.

This summary report provides a snapshot of the critical activities and takeaways from the Regional Foresight Workshop for Latin America and the Caribbean- LAC. It is intended to present a partial set of contributions that took place. The knowledge and insights produced through the workshop – the collective intelligence generated through the discussions – together with the results of the Delphi survey and Global Sensemaking exercises, will ultimately culminate in a Global Report to be published in 2024 that aims to inform deliberations of the Summit of the Future.

Background - Factors influencing LAC response to environmental challenges

Latin America and the Caribbean are critical in the global effort to combat climate change. It is home to 40% of the world's biodiversity and over 25% of its forests. The region also plays a significant role in sustainable food production and presents numerous opportunities for green energy development, with over 30% of its energy matrix coming from renewable sources.

However, the region's export profile is closely tied to potentially highly polluting activities like mineral extraction.

Despite contributing less than 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions, the region faces severe impacts of climate change, including increasing extreme weather patterns and environmental disasters. The cost of repairing these damages has exceeded 2% of the combined GDP of the region, affecting over 190 million people since 2000.

The average temperature in the region is expected to rise by one °C between 2021 and 2040, making it the second most vulnerable region in the world to natural disasters. However, the lack of environmental data in the region makes it challenging to measure progress towards environmental-related SDGs. It is also worth noting that Latin America and the Caribbean have the highest number of environmental social leaders killed.

According to the ECLAC Regional Observatory on Planning for Development, in terms of development policy, the majority of countries in the region recognize the serious threat posed by climate change as well as the need to adhere to international commitments on the subject. Among the main challenges that LAC countries recognize within their national planning instruments are the implementation of sustainable development policies, the intensity of the use of natural resources for productive activities, greenhouse gas emissions, the increasing vulnerability to extreme weather events, and, especially in the case of small Caribbean island states, the rise in sea levels, the erosion of coastal edges and loss of marine diversity.

To help address those challenges, the region adopted, for example, the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation, and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean ("Escazú Agreement") in March 2018, which entered into force in April 2021. Nevertheless, implementing this agreement faces numerous obstacles due to its potential impacts on the fragile regional economy.

Methodology - Regional Foresight Workshop

The regional foresight workshop for Latin America and the Caribbean took place in Bogota, Colombia, on December 4 and 5, 2023. The workshop was moderated and co-organized by Cepei (a data-driven think tank from the Global South) based on the methodology provided by the office of the Chief Scientist of UNEP. The workshop received support from the Chamber of Commerce of Bogota, which made its facilities available to the organizers.

The participatory process for the foresight workshop was organized around four key exercises:

1. **Ice breaker Exercise:** each participant was asked to share a word that describes the region while simultaneously passing a ball of yarn to one another. By the end, we had woven a network that connected us.
2. **Reviewing Scenarios:** Participants were presented with the four UNEP scenarios used as a foresight tool to engage in systemic reflections and explore potential challenges, opportunities, and options for action in the LAC region. Participants were invited to familiarise themselves with the four scenarios and consider how to contextualise each of the thematic areas for the region as well as to refine and validate the scenarios.
3. **Exploring Changes:** Participants were invited to a second discussion on exploring emerging changes under each of the four scenarios to analyze the potential for disruption of the state of the environment, planetary health, and human well-being.
4. **Identifying Policy Interventions:** Action-oriented strategic reflection to identify how each of the main changes impact sustainable development in the region and to propose specific policy interventions that could be implemented to address changes that could negatively impact sustainable development.



Workshop Photos

Underestimated factors affecting planetary health and/or human well-being

Below are the issues participants believed are currently undervalued in public discussion that are affecting planetary health and/or human well-being:

Clusters identified as priorities for LAC:

1. Climate volatility
2. Resource exploitation
3. Consciousness and behavioral dynamics
4. Natural resource depletion and scarcity
5. Public environmental health

Graphic 1. Ice breaker exercise



The Scenarios

The four global scenarios were presented to represent extreme yet feasible visions of the world in 2050. They contain overlapping elements that were categorized under 8 thematic areas, which are, in themselves, neither “utopian” or “dystopian” visions, but rather, representations of possible futures that are presented as tools to facilitate discussions with the view to allow the identifying themes, pathways, and interventions which may occur in the future.

Below is a summary of the scenarios and how they were contextualized for the LAC region:

Scenario A: The Sustainability Paradox

Global Scenario Summary:

Scenario A, also known as the 'sustainability paradox' or 'business as usual,' depicts that between 2023 and 2050, nothing has substantially changed in the LAC region. Environmental, social, political, and economic issues, far from being resolved, have deepened.

What will LAC look like in 2050 under this scenario?

While there are notable technological advances, the use of artificial intelligence, and a transition to cleaner energies, these efforts do not translate into well-being and health for people and the planet. The capitalist, extractive, and consumerist economic system has stayed the same. In a continent where poverty, inequality, and exclusion are so strong, more than initiatives for planet care, climate change mitigation, and the use of innovation and technologies is needed. Political instability and polarization generate conflicts and deepen inequalities. The need for strength in the international system and states hinders the ratification and implementation of global and regional environmental agreements. The values and ancestral wisdom about caring for Mother Earth and the community have been ignored and replaced by productivity, consumerism, and individualism values.

The actions proposed by the group to confront this scenario are grouped into four major topics:

- a) Inclusive, sustainable, responsible, democratic, and transparent **governance**;
- b) Clean, sustainable, and healthy **environment**;
- c) **Social dynamics**: justice, equity, well-being, social fabric; and
- d) Clean, accessible, sustainable, and affordable **technology**.

Some common elements in the different prioritized actions involve rebuilding social fabric, recovering ethics, democratic values, collective well-being, and the planet. This includes equitable access to resources, knowledge, opportunities, and technologies, especially for the most vulnerable.

Scenario B: Post-Truth Division

Global Scenario Summary:

The window of opportunity to take actions that ensure a healthy environment for us and future generations is closing. Science has long provided evidence, and solutions to the problems are already known, but the science-policy interface needs to be improved. Integrating culturally localized and alternative knowledge to scientific knowledge and the willingness to implement evidence-based solutions, fund them, and confront vested interests after centuries of globally unsustainable environmental management needs to be improved. This affects the credibility of science and politics and especially challenges the credibility of multilateralism as a provider of solutions.

What will LAC look like in 2050 under this scenario?

- Mechanisms of global and regional multilateral governance need to be improved, while states prove ineffective in addressing the needs of the people.
- The promises of science and AI to lead to a better world are frustrated by a need for more orientation toward the common good.
- With the decline of science as a provider of solutions and governments as their implementers, people forge new social bonds based on proximity and their ideas about what is true, good, and desirable. Beliefs compete to assert dominance over others.
- In this reconfiguring landscape, tensions and the loss of a sense of the common good beyond one's micro-community lead to the collapse of global production systems and an increased value placed on the local, from the availability of natural resources to social relationships.
- The world has become impoverished, segmented, and lost fundamental notions of the common good. People strive to meet their survival needs within a framework of environmental collapse, exacerbated by the impossibility of joint actions to address the problem globally.

The actions proposed by the group to confront this scenario are described under an integrated and multilevel approach:

- Integrated, as it cannot be limited to considering only "strictly environmental" issues but must anticipate the effects of other fields on the environment, especially when these effects can be considerable, as is the case with the growth of digital technologies.
- Multilevel requires concerted actions at the global, regional, national, and subnational levels, with the participation of multiple actors and knowledge in the construction and implementation of solutions.

It is a priority to ensure that environmental governance spaces have the capacities and support they need at each level because they are the necessary tools required to build and implement any other action.

Scenario C: Fortress Multipolarity

Global Scenario Summary: In this scenario, the year 2030 was critical as the Sustainable Development Goals, the Kunming-Montreal targets, and the Escazú Agreement were not achieved by that date. Considering this, some actions increased while others decreased, leading to a scenario of Fortress multipolarity by 2050.

What will LAC look like in 2050 under this scenario?

- There is a democratic crisis; mobility is controlled, global elites triumph, and private interests prevail over public ones. There is a loss of human agency over decision-making, increased military control, abandonment of multilateral agreements, and low trust in the system. This leads to a loss of freedom and "slavery".
- Territorial, environmental, and productive transformation. The territorial model that favours mega-cities results in migration from rural areas to urban centers and a boom in urban construction. Extreme climatic effects and increased pollution occur. There is corporate control over environmental and market management policies. Focused food production leads to losses in productive systems.
- Technology: control, use, and distribution. In this scenario, there is creativity in generating solutions. Supply chains become shorter. Social communication technologies decline, and extractive enclaves emerge.
- Coexistence model - social fabric. Demographics change, and the population ages. There is high conflict and social revolutions. Key issues include humanization, identity, cultural expression, and physical and mental health.

This group identified more than 30 actions in order to confront this scenario:

- Strengthen the implementation of international agreements with subnational and local governments.
- Inclusion of youth and women in various spaces for construction and decision-making.
- Participation of civil society in different decision-making scenarios.
- Align the operation of IFIs and Development Banks with UN treaties and agendas and the inter-American human rights system.
- Academic training for democracy building.
- Decentralize decision-making.
- Mechanisms for the participation of indigenous peoples.
- Implement “prior consultation” (consulta previa) in a free and informed way.
- Create a council of experts, civil associations, and scientists at the global, regional, and national levels.
- Democratize the media.
- National statistical systems should incorporate ecosystem-based asset accounts.
- National science and technology organizations should prioritize the valuation of ecosystem functions.
- Formulate land-use policies that correct imbalances and prevent segregation.
- Regeneration of soils, watersheds, and coastal areas.
- Establish protocols focusing on regulating carbon emissions.
- Ratification and implementation of the Escazú Agreement.
- Direct productive reconversion with farmers.
- Strengthen sanctioning capacity regarding environmental regulation and territorial management with transparency and accountability.
- Valuation of ecosystem functions.
- Strengthen social protection systems to reduce inequality, exclusion, and poverty.
- Safeguard traditions of indigenous communities and local people.
- Network of Indigenous Women in Science - ECMIA.
- Collaborative work with indigenous peoples for the care and protection of Mother Earth.
- Strengthen the participation of civil society in public policies at all levels.
- Regulation of AI to prevent improper use or charging.
- Reduce the digital and technological gap in the region and promote universal digital literacy.
- Formulate policies for free access to technology.
- Promote innovation in productive sectors to improve productivity with environmental sustainability criteria and social safeguards.

Scenario D: Global Awakening

Global Scenario Summary:

The “Global Awakening” scenario was the most utopian for the groups. The deep political, economic, social, and digital crises that we will reach in 2030 are considered a trigger for a new awareness of the interconnection of our actions and their impact on the planet.

What will LAC look like in 2050 under this scenario?

The new polycentric approach to environmental governance was imagined as the result of increased reliance on science and experts to resolve crises. The integration of the exact sciences with the social sciences, and the use of AI-based or new technologies to help radically reduce the use of energy and resources was considered imperative. A change in economic growth policies was imagined, considering that in 2050, natural resources will have more value than money itself. Countries that are self-sufficient in futuristic agriculture and natural resources would become the richest countries. However, we needed economic experts to develop this matter further. This change in economic paradigm, the recommendation of experts, and unity with nature for reasons of survival forces us to adopt collective policies, the definition of new global and regional scientific priorities, revolutionary consumer policies that must be imposed by new governments that are advised by scientists, to move away from consumer behavior and through transparency in systems (which can be automated but managed by humans), achieve a new concept of social justice in society. Many issues needed further

discussion, for example, demographic growth or balance, how to address the needs of the most vulnerable in the future, changing values in the digitalized societies of the future, and mechanisms to force the wills of the actors in the region, so that the world returns to a balance of planetary health.

Possible Policy Interventions

Having constructed and added depth to each of the scenarios, the participants were invited to consider interventions to address changes that could negatively impact sustainable development, focusing on:

- **What interventions will prevent, improve or mitigate** these 2050 visions?
- **How** could they be implemented? And **by whom**?

Scenario A

WHAT	HOW	WHO
Inclusive, sustainable, responsible, democratic, and transparent governance .	Regulation of lobbying practices (legislation and actual implementation).	Parliamentarians, media, responsible and free press.
	Increase in citizen participation, education for empowerment and sustainability	Community organizations, NGOs, private sector, religious organizations, local and community agencies, schools, media.
Clean, sustainable, and healthy environment .	Sustainable resources management	
	Shift in social values	Visionary leaders, indigenous groups, youth.
	Research with public and private funding	Environmentalists, universities, community.
	Education, Knowledge strengthening	Family, community leaders, church, education ministries.
Social dynamics: justice, equity, well-being, social fabric.	Reconstruction of social fabric	Community institutions, peace organizations, families, social activists, scientists.
	Innovative socio-economic development policies.	Interdisciplinary research communities.
	Application of human rights.	Ombudsman offices, judicial system, police, NGOs, international organizations, governments.
	Research and development capacity-building funding.	Family, social welfare support staff.
Clean, accessible, sustainable, and affordable technology .	Research and development capacity-building funding.	Public and private sectors.

	Universal and free access to digital technologies. Digital literacy and connectivity to close urban-rural gaps.	Ministries of education and technology, communication specialists, private sector
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Scenario B

WHAT	HOW	WHO
Strengthen global environmental governance and trust in multilateralism.	<p>1. Creation of an Environmental Council</p> <p>1.a. Normative and management tasks for an implementation tracker of multilateral environmental agreements.</p> <p>1.b. Includes assessment and continuous monitoring mechanisms related to technologies with considerable environmental impact, whether direct, indirect, or potential.</p> <p>2. Increased technological education with innovation in global programs (UNESCO, etc).</p> <p>2.a. Capacity development through training community leaders (including at the national and subnational levels) to promote consensus on various shared-interest topics.</p> <p>3. Strengthening credibility and trust in multilateralism and the UN through action:</p> <p>3.a. Capacity building for anticipating environmental issues.</p> <p>3.b. The entire UN system must have ongoing strategies for engaging with multiple stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UN Secretary-General, CoP Secretariats. • States (working under groups created around environmental risks and/or climate vulnerabilities) - United Nations General Assembly. • Non-governmental actors with proven expertise in providing concrete solutions to environmental issues. • Regional economic commissions, especially but not exclusively their environmental divisions (commissions should make environmental issues a cross-cutting aspect of their management). • Media, including influencers, and YouTubers. • UNEP
Strengthen regional environmental governance and the "spirit of the region."	<p>1. Formalize and institutionalize the participation of non-governmental actors in decision-making forums on environmental matters at the national and regional levels.</p>	<p>1. States that can act as champions in promoting the idea.</p> <p>2. Subnational governments (especially in countries with natural resources).</p> <p>3. ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean).</p>

	<p>1.a. Ensure effective participation for less privileged sectors.</p> <p>2. Actively integrate scientific literacy on environmental issues into capacity-building programs in the region (including efforts to make scientific texts accessible to the entire population and data literacy so that everyone can understand what the data says about the environmental situation).</p> <p>2.a. Collaborate with organizations dedicated to nature conservation.</p> <p>2.b. Establish citizen environmental oversight bodies under a regional umbrella.</p> <p>2.c. Provide support and technical assistance to subnational governments.</p> <p>3. Collaboratively build a regional environmental pact.</p> <p>3.a. Include considerations of participatory budgets where environmental aspects are a resource allocation item.</p> <p>3.b. Experts and senior officials in the environmental field should accompany the process.</p> <p>3.c. Establish a regional advisory group of experts in artificial intelligence and the environment.</p> <p>4. Strengthen the role of civil society in debates and decision-making at the national and regional levels.</p> <p>4.a. Ensure the safety of environmental leaders, for example, through the full implementation of the Escazú Agreement.</p> <p>5. Strengthen the science-policy-society interface.</p> <p>5.a. There needs to be more than a science-policy interface; it must include society to ensure the presence of</p>	<p>4. Indigenous and peasant communities.</p> <p>5. Academics, scientists, and ancestral wisdom keepers (holders of ancestral/original knowledge).</p> <p>6. Civil society organizations with recognized work in environmental issues.</p>
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	<p>knowledge and cultural insights different from the scientific.</p> <p>5.b. A more involved and educated society increases the likelihood of success in advocating for regional positions at the global level.</p> <p>5.b.1. Dissemination of scientific findings through theater, art, and visualizations.</p> <p>6. Establish agreements on social and environmental safeguards against extractive processes, expressing a minimum regional consensus linked to the protection of natural systems.</p>	
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Scenario C

WHAT	HOW	WHO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratic Crisis • Territorial, environmental and productive transformation • Social fabric • Use and distribution of technology 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. States that can act as champions in promoting the idea. 2. Subnational governments (especially in countries where they have jurisdiction over natural resources). 3. ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean). 4. Indigenous and peasant communities. 5. Academics, scientists, and ancestral wisdom keepers (holders of ancestral/original knowledge). 6. Civil society organizations with recognized work in environmental issues. 	<p>Governments Civil society Private sector Academy Media Financers International organizations Local and indigenous communities Local governments Regional organizations</p>

Scenario D

WHAT	HOW	WHO
<p>Law and Policy - Enforcement through laws / effective participation, voices.</p> <p>Cooperation and inclusion. Education: cooperation and inclusion of interculturality in the</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Law and Policy - Enforcement. Tech to alleviate the justice system reduces impunity and corruption. 2. Cooperation and inclusion. Platforms for info 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Law and Policy – Enforcement. Private/public sector, ad hoc tech in justice systems. UN anti-corruption commission, governments, and civil society.

<p>education system (key role in the change of values).</p> <p>Nature-based solutions / Environmental and social safeguards/climate strategy / new economy based on resources</p> <p>Technology-based solutions/transparency/capacity building</p>	<p>sharing to increase transparency.</p> <p>3. Nature-based solutions. Establish minimum common accords.</p>	<p>2. Nature-based solutions. OAS, UNEP, national governance.</p>
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Based on the work of the four groups and after reflecting on the interventions that could prevent, improve, and mitigate the visions by 2050, the LAC participants converged on different aspects, of which we want to highlight the following four:

- **There is an urgent need to implement multilateral agreements, particularly the Escazú Agreement.**

The region is aware of its natural capital and the value that this can have over time. It recognizes the importance of **implementing multilateral agreements**, particularly those where the participation of local actors and the leadership of indigenous peoples and ethnic communities are privileged. In this context, the Escazú agreement and its implementation is something to which the participants gave particular attention.

LAC is aware of its contribution to biodiversity. In the future, this may have great value in global geopolitics facing the Global North in scenarios where planetary limits are reaching their ceiling.

Compliance with the multilateral agenda is seen as an instrument to protect competitive advantages in the future. **It is essential, therefore, to strengthen the legal tools at the multilateral and national level to ensure compliance mechanisms.**

- **Strengthening social fabric and recognizing local knowledge.**

The participants find great value in rescuing cultural elements that have not been considered for a long time, such as the ancestral knowledge of indigenous and ethnic peoples. This differentiating element strategically elevates the relevance of the LAC region compared to others.

Additionally, participants recognize that family, community-based organisations, and churches, among others, are strong elements of social cohesion in the region.

LAC recognizes itself as a region where the concept of family, community, tradition, and ancestry is an enabler to face sustainability challenges. For this reason, governments must take **concrete measures to protect those values and strengthen the social fabric in the region.**

The specific task is not only to preserve these elements but to emphasize **rescuing ancestral knowledge that has the risk of not being taken into account and can have a significant impact on the planet's future.**

- **Promotion of nature-based solutions.**

The participants agreed that solutions to global problems must be addressed from a regional perspective and in a local context. This means that an articulation must allow conservation and environmental mitigation to incorporate the communities at their center. Nature-based solutions are seen as a tool through which the needs of human beings are met by combining the best practices in agriculture, restoration, and environmental conservation.

The region understands nature-based solutions as a mechanism of resilience and sustainability towards environmental and socio-economic challenges.

The LAC region understands its role in the climate agenda but also prioritizes the contribution it may have in the integration with the agenda of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Therefore, there is a demand towards the **global north to compensate for environmental damage through investments in strategic ecosystems that ensure environmental protection in the region in a future scenario.**

- **Management of the use and handling of technology and artificial intelligence.**

The region is aware of the technological and AI advances that are taking place in the world, and can impact both negatively and positively. The discussion revolved around technology's relevance to social and environmental contexts. However, there is significant uncertainty about the speed at which these technological advances can occur and how communities and governments can face the associated risks. For LAC, it is also essential to consider inequalities in access to technology, especially the gaps between rural and urban areas.

The participants' concrete action proposals regarding this issue revolve around regulating **inclusive and democratic access to technology**. The development of **infrastructure** to close rural-urban gaps and strengthening **institutions** that promote social cohesion to prevent the risks associated with technology are also essential.

Conclusions

The LAC workshop yielded exciting results that will contribute to the global exercise and the recommendations that are part of the outcome. The workshop had a highly diverse and well-attended participation from people across the region, fostering active and enriching exchanges.

The methodology was successfully implemented with minimal adjustments, allowing adaptation to the fact that the workshop took place in two languages with simultaneous translation. However, this did not negatively impact its development. Making an active effort to include Caribbean participants has fostered more significant commitment from all participants, ensuring the smooth progress of the exercise.

Participants made valuable contributions to their scenarios and engaged with other groups' exercises, creating a dynamic information exchange that strengthened the entire exercise. The workshop experienced great emotion as participants embraced the methodology, expressing their feelings about different scenarios with considerable creativity.

While the scenarios led to very different contexts, the region managed to identify common aspects that could be relevant for implementing actions in the short and medium term. Common aspects identified include:

- Implementation of multilateral agreements, particularly the Escazú Agreement.
- Strengthening social fabric and recognizing local knowledge.
- Promotion of nature-based solutions.
- Management of the use and handling of technology and artificial intelligence.

An issue that was not recorded in these four elements but that appeared recurrently throughout the discussions and at the workshop's closing refers to the importance of promoting sustainable consumption patterns that reduce the speed of environmental damage.

The region sees itself as possessing significant natural capital that must be safeguarded and prioritized under any scenario. However, there is awareness of the need to recognize the people's needs, particularly the identity of communities and local knowledge that must be protected.

Next Steps

The outcomes of the LAC regional workshop will inform the Delphi Survey's second round. This second round aims to prioritize the 259 signals and over 50 issues submitted during the first round of the survey to the top 18 (three from each region). The original 6000 experts were invited to participate in the initial Delphi survey, and all those who participated in the regional workshops will be invited to rank the top 18 issues based on their potential for being most disruptive. Survey respondents will also be asked to give their thoughts on whether and how UNEP should be involved in each issue.

All the data gathered during this foresight exercise will contribute to the final Foresight Report, presented at the Summit of the Future in New York in September 2024, and UNEP's strategic long-term outlook.

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