

UNEP Management Response for Climate Action Sub-Programme Evaluation for 2014-2023

A. Summary:

- The Subprogramme Climate Action is evaluated as strategic and highly relevant for UNEP and the global community. Within the evaluation period (2014-2023), the Subprogramme demonstrated strong performance in achieving its targets as outlined in the Programme Performance Reviews. The Subprogramme addresses decarbonization, dematerialization and resilience efforts in a comprehensive way and covers the adaptation as well as the mitigation goals of the Paris Agreement including the enhanced transparency framework.
- Project-level performance is Satisfactory on average, with the lowest ratings being on likelihood of impact and sustainability of results where the average rating is Moderately Likely. Adaptation-focused work consistently met all targets across the period covered by the evaluation. However, mitigation efforts and REDD+ initiatives fell short of some targets during the period.
- In summary, the Subprogramme on Climate Action has delivered positive outcomes contributing to the advancement of UNEP's climate stability objective. Notable achievements include support for the adoption of climate change mitigation, adaptation and disaster risk reduction strategies and policies by both state and non-state actors, mobilization of climate finance and fulfilment of reporting obligations under the Enhanced Transparency Framework arrangements of the Paris Agreement.
- While the SP-CA coordination function has been effective at achieving the MTS and POW outcomes, there is room for further synergies across the work of the subprogramme (for example, across adaptation and mitigation); better identification of gaps in UNEP's work on climate action and for bringing together existing work within UNEP to address these gaps.

B. Management Response to the evaluation of the Subprogramme on Climate Action

1. This Management response has been prepared through a consultative process with the relevant UNEP Division Directors, Evaluation Reference Group, and staff. UNEP Management welcomes the timing of the Evaluation of UNEP's Climate Action SubProgramme and its envisioned input towards the next Mid-Term Strategy and Programme of Work and full operationalization of the Climate Change Division. Management's view and proposed actions on each recommendation are provided in the table below.
2. Finally, management appreciates the high degree of collaboration that characterized the evaluation process, the independence of the assessment, and the timely provision of the final report.

UNEP Management Response for Climate Action Sub-Programme Evaluation for 2014-2023

Recommendation 1: UNEP should continue to create and manage knowledge-cum-implementation partnerships around important climate solutions.	
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	In climate action, speed is of the essence, and UNEP should enhance it by systematically leveraging the recipes and lessons from functioning partnerships and apply them to new initiatives. Partnerships have been part of the organization’s strategy for a long time. For some of UNEP’s flagship partnerships, people have forgotten that they started out as a partnership, for example the IPCC, or the REN21. Programmes like the Global Programmes of the GEF (Electric vehicles, Cities) model a role for UNEP as a knowledge broker and facilitator who links implementation experience between different countries. UNEP’s specific trait is that it can link global advocacy and science-based knowledge management with action on the ground, in a sectoral, global-umbrella-with-country-pillars approach. By streamlining its priorities and leveraging its strengths as a knowledge-based and normative organization through strategic partnerships, UNEP can potentially enhance its overall effectiveness in tackling climate change and avoid being distracted into areas that do not play to its strengths. For example, UNEP and UNDP are increasingly leveraging each other’s strengths through improved cooperation. Working with IUCN and UNDP, UNEP has promoted EbA to become a mainstream activity. Similar collaborations can and should arise with other organizations – and increasingly these might not be international networks but more and more local organizations as environmental competence is built up around the globe.
Priority Level:	Opportunity for improvement
Type of Recommendation	UNEP-Wide
Responsibility:	Climate Change Division, Industry and Economy Division, Ecosystem Division, Policy and Programme Division, Private Sector Unit (CSD)
Proposed implementation timeframe:	2024-25 PoW, MTS 2026-2029
Management Response:	<p>UNEP recognizes the recommendation as an opportunity for improvement. UNEP will continue operating through partnerships guided by its Partnership Policy (ref) and as highlighted in the 2022-2025 MTS, including as one of the direct outcomes of the Climate Action subprogramme. UNEP will continue to participate in, and lead, partnerships for the delivery of UNEP’s MTS/PoW. Establishing, managing and participating in partnerships always require thorough assessment of long-term resource need for effective secretarial and support functions. UNEP continuously reviews the sustainability of engagement with partners and partnerships, the secretarial function, the overall impact of partnerships, and UNEP’s exit strategy, to free up resources for other emerging issues.</p> <p>We currently have many successful partnerships, for example, the Initiative for Climate Action Transparency (ICAT) which partners with institutions like WRI, GHG Management Institute and others to deliver guidance and technical assistance to a large number of countries in meeting their transparency obligations under the Paris Agreement. In UNEP’s experience, the most successful partnerships have funding linked to a trust fund and/or supported by core resources and a direct linkage to the delivery on UNEP’s PoW indicators.</p>

UNEP Management Response for Climate Action Sub-Programme Evaluation for 2014-2023

	Moving into the next MTS/PoWs 2026-2029, UNEP is exploring establishing and strengthening partnerships across emerging issues; loss and damage, digital transparency solutions, carbon dioxide removal, amongst other topics with the aim of convening common understanding, guidance and action on emerging issues.
--	--

Recommendation 2: UNEP should develop more strategies to provide countries with readily applicable information on solutions for both mitigation and adaptation measures.

Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	One way to enhance speed is to enhance efficiency. Already at the level of funding applications, “cookie cutter” projects are a standing practice (cf. PCP on Adaptation and Resilience and GCF NAP funding). But some in the organization doubt that it is UNEP’s role to repeat successful approaches and that it should focus on innovation. On the other hand, for UNEP, understanding country action is important to remain relevant. While highlighting gaps in high-level science-based publications is important to provide a call for action, communicating and providing scalable solutions might be a more active contribution to overcoming the challenge. The organization should develop (digital) tools for available solutions based on evidence and provide active knowledge management on what works (and not only on what are the gaps) – and lobby for their implementation through its networks. If this can be linked with the scientific core and approach of the organisation, this can ensure that scientific knowledge is effectively translated into actionable information.
Priority Level:	Opportunity for improvement
Type of Recommendation	UNEP-Wide
Responsibility:	Climate Change Division, Industry and Economy Division and Ecosystem Division
Proposed implementation timeframe:	2024-
Management Response:	<p>UNEP recognizes the recommendation as an opportunity for improvement. UNEP’s sectoral solutions, partnerships and knowledge products (e.g., Global Status Report on Buildings and Construction) do list and provide guidance on solutions. These solutions are, furthermore, implemented through the project portfolio and amplified through GEF impact programmes, partnerships exchange and advocacy e.g., through The Global Adaptation Network.</p> <p>Going forward, UNEP seeks to strengthen awareness raising and piloting of emerging solutions and the scale-up of “tried and tested” solutions. This will largely be done through the partnership model discussed under recommendation 1.</p> <p>UNEP has room to improve the translation of partnership guidance and project lessons learned into the next stage of project pipelines, public-private partnerships and sister agency up-take for scaled -up reach and impact. UNEP’s work on Technology Needs Assessments, and the United for Efficiency, are examples of where a dedicated focus on scientific potential assessments provides the foundation for project and private sector investments in tested and tangible solutions and technologies. The Cool Coalition and the District Energy Systems program are also examples of science-based focus on a high potential area combining normative work with country support.</p>

UNEP Management Response for Climate Action Sub- Programme Evaluation for 2014-2023

Recommendation 3: Internally, UNEP should improve transparency and communication on resource allocation and should enhance clarity on where long-term resources are needed to ensure continuity versus where project-based initiatives are better suited.	
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The evaluation underscores the critical need for improved communication regarding resource allocation within UNEP, impacting both internal and external stakeholders. Internally, a lack of transparency in resource allocation processes leads to budgetary unpredictability for the Subprogramme as well as a lack of clarity regarding the availability of staff resources. This not only hinders the development of strategic long-term plans but is also resulting in staff dissatisfaction. Externally, donor countries have also expressed discontent with the current system, citing difficulties in tracing the flow of their contributions. This lack of transparency hinders their ability to demonstrate the impact of their investments that may lead to a decrease in contributions to the Environment Fund and a shift towards earmarked funding. While the introduction of thematic funds represents a potential step forward, further strategic development is necessary to ensure their effectiveness. Decisions cannot be based on valid assumptions about the functioning and needed resources without a remapping of the existing staff positions to the subprogrammes.
Priority Level:	Critical
Type of Recommendation	UNEP-Wide
Responsibility:	Budget Steering Committee, SMT, PPD, CSD
Proposed implementation timeframe:	2023-2025
Management Response:	<p>UNEP recognizes the recommendation as a critical opportunity for improvement. The establishment of a dedicated Climate Change Division is the first step towards ensuring senior-level representation in organizational priority setting and resources allocation. The issue around high reliance on ear-marked project funding and the limited core resources for climate objectives, has been recognized by UNEP leadership. The creation of the Programme Coordination Projects and the Thematic Funds are aimed at remedying the situation and securing more flexible resources for more strategic and responsive delivery of the climate subprogramme. Going forward, into the 2026-2029 MTS/PoW, staff posts and related resources allocations will also be reviewed as part of setting the result-based budget for the organization, its three thematic objectives, and 7 subprogrammes in the Programme of Work 2026-2027 and 2028-2029.</p> <p>The Corporate Services Division has strengthened the Partnerships and Resource Mobilization Branch. UNEP also regularly reports to its governing bodies and other stakeholders on income, available resources and expenditure by sub-programme.</p> <p>While an approved biennium budget is in place, allocations are based on actual cash in hand is done on an annual basis. A Budget Steering Committee (BSC) reviews actual cash balances (received and unspent from previous year) available for allocation, requests by Divisions and strategic priorities. The Budget Steering Committee recommends to the Executive Director who approves and communicates the allocation within UNEP.</p>

UNEP Management Response for Climate Action Sub- Programme Evaluation for 2014-2023

Recommendation 4: UNEP should fully implement its strategic paradigm and strive to utilize indicators that are tied to the Paris Agreement, suited for management and reporting and able to demonstrate UNEP’s contribution to filling the gap.	
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	<p>The Paris Agreement of 2015 gives a clear direction where climate action should go, in its Article 2.1 – a) holding temperature rise to well below 2 degrees, b) increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse effects of climate change, and c) making financial flows consistent with this pathway. The Subprogramme demonstrates a strong alignment of its objectives and activities with the Paris Agreement, e.g., with the objectives outlined in the Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2025. But UNEP could go even further. The EGR and AGR tell us exactly where to focus our attention on climate action. UNEP has formulated the strategic objective of “Climate stability” in its MTS 2022-2025, which is “where net zero greenhouse gas emissions and resilience in the face of climate change are achieved.” (UNEP, 2021, p. 20) The expected 2030 outcome of the SP is that “government and non-government development actions are compatible with the long-term mitigation and resilience goals of the Paris Agreement.” (UNEP, 2021b, p. 22) But where the outcome indicators need become more operational – coming down from this global target – they do not become sufficiently specific to guide action.</p> <p>The operational indicators from the POWs and MTS below that level are merely focused on accountability and mostly express reach. They count – for example - the number of policies, but do not take into account relevance, ambition levels or effectiveness of policies. “Investment leveraged” can be seen as measuring UNEPs contribution to climate action but the levels that can be leveraged by UNEP will always pale in comparison to the gaps reported in UNEP’s own reports, and thus cannot be meaningfully related to the gaps, either. Generally, UNEP’s indicators do not measure the contribution of the organization towards “closing the gap”. This means that the PCPs and thematic Divisions cannot use these indicators for their internal strategic coordination or demonstrate that they cover the gaps in climate action as demonstrated by EGR and AGR. The PCPs still base their Theories of Change on the SP-CA building blocks, lacking a coherent or complete programme logic behind it – and thus, also no (or very few) SMART indicators. But as the current MTS already follows the PA logic, closing the gaps on the lower-level indicators is possible with the next POW.</p> <p>Last but not least, the indicator reporting seems transparent but the spot check of the evaluation team was unable to reproduce the indicator counts, or validate them with country level information. This can also be traced back to the nature of the indicators, which need improvement – and this is not the first evaluation to highlight this.</p>
Priority Level:	Opportunity for improvement
Type of Recommendation	UNEP-wide
Responsibility:	Climate Change Division, Policy and Programme Division, Climate Action subprogramme coordination team
Proposed implementation timeframe:	2026-2029 (new MTS and 2026-2027 PoW)

UNEP Management Response for Climate Action Sub- Programme Evaluation for 2014-2023

Management Response:	UNEP recognizes the recommendation as an opportunity for improvement, but stresses that the Adaptation and Emissions Gap reports are not intended as guidance documents for UNEP action only. As such, these reports cover topics that are of high importance to delivering the Paris Agreement, including where other organizations may be better placed to intervene. The recommendation on direct linkage between indicators of the Paris Agreement and UNEP’s PoW must consider the importance of causal linkage to UNEP interventions. Without causal linkages between UNEP’s work and indicators it is difficult for member states to assess UNEP’s impact and value for money. In the UNEP 2026-2029 MTS and PoWs setting process, indicators will be reviewed and strengthened, and latest advancement in collecting data and the value of long-term data when measuring progress will also be considered.
-----------------------------	--

Recommendation 5: Further clarify roles and responsibilities of SP-CA involved staff, including integration of the SP CA coordination function in the new CA Division.	
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Noting the establishment of the new Climate Change Division, if greater clarity is desired with respect to the roles of the SP-CA coordination function (PPD, global SP coordinator, regional SP coordinator, other staff), and UNEP’s divisions and regional offices on climate action, then UNEP could consider supplementing the UNEP Delivery Model Policy 2022 with a high-level outline of the functions of the divisions, regions and SP coordination function on climate action, including specifying a DRI for specific areas such as engagement with external partners. This could be implemented as a test run in 2024 – 2025, i.e., in the final phases of the current MTS.
Priority Level:	Opportunity for improvement
Type of Recommendation	UNEP-Wide
Responsibility:	2022-2023
Proposed implementation timeframe:	Executive Office, Climate Change Division, Subprogramme Coordinator
Management Response:	<p>UNEP recognizes the recommendation as an opportunity for improvement. The new Climate Change Division is the first response for greater clarity on roles and responsibilities. The Division Director will be the Direct Responsible Individual for the delivery of the climate objective. Since the evaluation took place, the Subprogramme coordination function has also been moved to the Climate Change Division. The structures of the Climate Change Division are likely to be reviewed under the new Director and SMT will continue discussions on close collaboration across the 3 thematic objectives and 7 subprogrammes. The structure for the programmes has also been clarified through Programme Coordination Projects and Direct Responsible Individuals, and the organization-wide Delivery Model outlines responsibilities across divisions, regional offices, and Global and Regional coordinators.</p> <p>The new 2026-2029 MTS and PoW also provide an opportunity to further clarify the roles and contributions of the enabling and foundational subprogrammes towards the thematic climate objective.</p>

UNEP Management Response for Climate Action Sub-Programme Evaluation for 2014-2023

Recommendation 6: UNEP should increase practical relevance and internal utilization of flagship reports by improving coordination and communication across divisions	
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	UNEP employs the EGR and similar gap analyses and similar gap analyses to identify potential areas for intervention by contrasting scientific findings with the current state. By leveraging these analyses to inform its approach and projects on climate action, UNEP could achieve a more strategic direction. This would necessitate enhanced internal coordination and communication within the organization. These efforts could involve systematically evaluating which findings hold the most relevance for UNEP's collaborations with member countries and exploring how these insights can be translated into solution-oriented deliverables.
Priority Level:	Opportunity for improvement
Type of Recommendation	UNEP-Wide
Responsibility:	2024-
Proposed implementation timeframe:	Climate Change Division, Early Warning and Assessment Division, Communication Division
Management Response:	<p>UNEP recognizes the recommendation as an opportunity for improvement. The insights provided in the AGR and EGR on progress towards adaptation and mitigation goals of the Paris Agreement are widely used in UNEP. The analysis is used to inform countries on progress and to guide UN joint efforts and messaging. The insights from reports are also key input for the setting of UNEP's MTS and PoW. Furthermore, the framing of AGR and EGR are prominent in UNEP's climate action narrative (climate science and transparency, sectoral solutions to close the adaptation and emissions gaps, and finance to implement sectoral solutions). For example, the sectoral emission reduction potential of EGR 2017 has directly influence UNEP's focus and the subprogramme has requested for an update of the same in the 2024 EGR to assist in assessing the status of sectoral solutions and technical feasibility to close the gap. UNEP's Programme of Work focus areas also frequently influence the topics of the two gap reports and communication is connected to on-going work. E.g., the 2023 EGR focus on Carbon Dioxide Removal has a direct connection to IPCC scenarios and UNEP aim to strengthen this work area in future resource allocations.</p> <p>UNEP has initiated an effort to better align various sectoral reports with the gap report approach, as to ensure better alignment between the higher-level and specific sectors.</p>

Recommendation 7: UNEP should increase its leadership visibility in the global climate action arena	
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	If UNEP wants to be perceived as a champion and a trendsetter in climate action through its activities and products, the organization will need to make itself more visible at the major negotiations, such as the COP. UNEP apparently lacks a prominent public figure who embodies the organization's work on climate change. This makes it harder for stakeholders to recognize UNEP's contributions and hold

UNEP Management Response for Climate Action Sub- Programme Evaluation for 2014-2023

	<p>UNEP accountable. The new Director will need to make an effort to become a prominent spokesperson for UNEP's climate efforts, raising public awareness and accountability. UNEP's senior leadership recognizes the need to enhance its performance on climate action. This is evident in the interim Director's consolidation plan for the new Climate Change Division, which resonates with several key recommendations of this evaluation, including strengthening partnerships, fostering internal cooperation within UNEP, and increasing engagement with UNFCCC and COP negotiations (UNEP, 2024b).</p>
Priority Level:	Important
Type of Recommendation	UNEP-Wide
Responsibility:	2024-
Proposed implementation timeframe:	Executive Office, Climate Change Division, Communication Division
Management Response:	<p>UNEP recognizes the recommendation as an important area for improvement. The effort to strengthen UNEP's leadership visibility on the global climate action arena is delivered through the new Climate Change Division and recruitment of Senior (D2 and D1) Directors. UNEP has a dedicated climate change communication strategy and UNEP will also organize World Environment Day 2026 on the climate change topic to enhance visibility of climate action. UNEP has furthermore organized media training for its senior climate staff, updated its Climate Action website, and provided more guidance to UNEP Goodwill Ambassadors on climate advocacy.</p> <p>Regarding visibility at climate gatherings, to-date, IPCC and gap reports are key reference points in negotiations and referenced by tens of Heads of State at every CoP. UNEP is working towards further enhanced visibility by dedicated information sessions for negotiation groups and the CPR.</p>