

We are all in this together







Message from the Executive Director

Last year brought both successes and disappointments in global efforts to tackle the triple planetary crisis: the crisis of climate change; the crisis of nature and biodiversity loss and desertification; and the crisis of pollution and waste.

At the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP16) in Cali, Colombia, nations agreed to formally recognize and expand the role of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in saving biodiversity and to operationalize a mechanism to share benefits from digital genetic information – but issues around resource mobilization and a monitoring framework were carried over to the resumed session to be held in February 2025. At the UN Climate Change Conference (COP29) in Baku, Azerbaijan, nations agreed on international carbon market standards and promised to triple the amount of financing for developing nations hit by climate change – but this commitment fell short of what many countries had called for.

In Busan, Republic of Korea, nations made substantial progress towards a global instrument to end plastic pollution, with emerging convergence on 29 out of 32 articles – but the talks were adjourned without a final text being agreed. Countries will now need to work on bridging their differences to meet the aspirations of the 2022 UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) resolution to end plastic pollution. At the UN conference on land and desertification in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, nations launched the Riyadh Action Agenda, committing US\$12 billion for land restoration and drought resilience initiatives, and the Riyadh Global Drought Resilience Partnership – but were unable to agree on a legally binding protocol to address drought, which has plagued countries across the world, from Africa and Asia to Latin America and Europe.

So, the reality is that environmental multilateralism is sometimes messy and sometimes arduous. But even in complex geopolitical times, collaboration across borders and across our differences is the only option to protect the foundation of humanity's existence – Planet Earth. UNEP calls for a dramatic uptick in ambition and action in the coming year. Nations must promise and deliver huge cuts to greenhouse gas emissions in the next round of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), due by February. They must start delivering the necessary finance for climate adaptation and for desertification and biodiversity action. And they must work towards agreeing on a strong instrument to end plastic pollution before UNEA-7 in December.

As this annual report shows, UNEP has been working tirelessly to help create a broad tent for this to happen. UNEP's science has laid out exactly what nations need to do in their NDCs and supported many nations in preparing these pledges. UNEP is providing crucial data to support nations and companies as they act on methane emissions, with real success. UNEP is providing finance and technical support on everything from ecosystem restoration to clean air. UNEP is working with the private sector to align their businesses and financing with action on the triple planetary crisis. And projects that UNEP supports are making a tangible difference in the lives of people around the world from Kenya to Mexico to Niue, enhancing resilience and reducing vulnerabilities.

But humanity is not out of the woods. Temperatures are rising. Ecosystems are disappearing. And pollution remains a deadly threat. These are global problems that require global solutions. The world must pull together to build a fairer, more sustainable planet. And UNEP will be there to support countries every step of the way.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Inger Andersen'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'A' at the end.

Inger Andersen

UNEP Executive Director

Bringing the world together

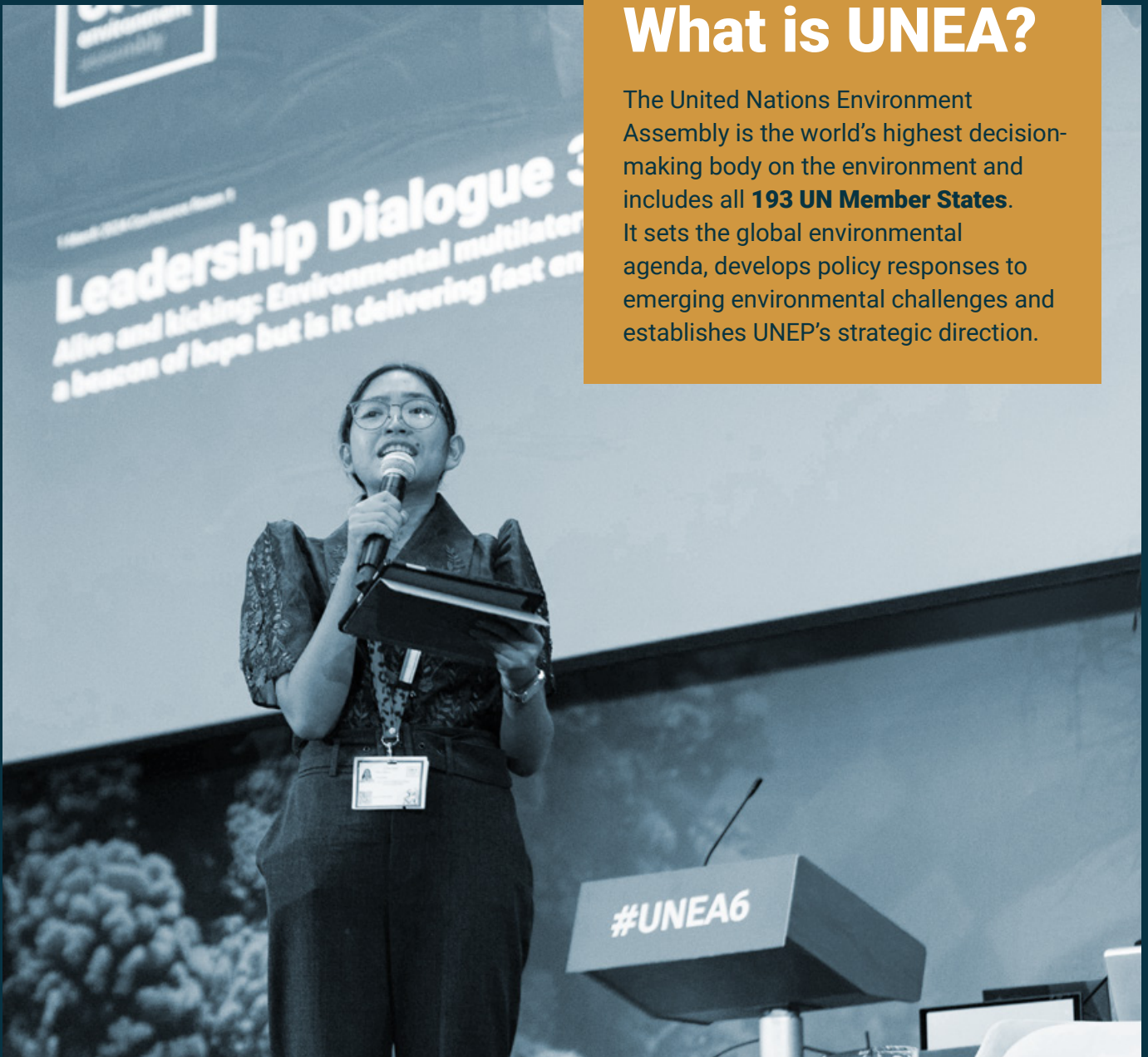
During its sixth session, the United Nations Environment Assembly passed 15 resolutions designed to protect people and planet.

At the **United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6)**, **nations resolved** to rein in pollution from chemicals, to combat desertification and address sand and dust storms, to protect the ocean, to reduce air pollution, to better manage freshwater supplies, and to support the sustainable mining of energy transition minerals. With a record of 5,600-plus attendees, including 12 heads of state or government, the assembly demonstrated that countries can overcome geopolitical divisions to unite on environmental action. “The spirit of true, inclusive multilateralism was evident throughout this vibrant assembly,” **said Inger Andersen**, Executive Director of UNEP.



What is UNEA?

The United Nations Environment Assembly is the world's highest decision-making body on the environment and includes all **193 UN Member States**. It sets the global environmental agenda, develops policy responses to emerging environmental challenges and establishes UNEP's strategic direction.



Youth activist Grace Catapang from the Philippines takes the stage at UNEA-6. Ahead of the session, 450 young people from around the world gathered to discuss some of the planet's biggest environmental challenges. *Photo: UNEP*

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I am proud to say this was a successful assembly, where we advanced on our core mandate: the legitimate **human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment**, everywhere.

Leila Benali
UNEA-6 President


For the first time, UNEA dedicated a day to increasing the impact of **Multilateral Environmental Agreements** through more united action. These international accords have served as frameworks to protect endangered species, repair the ozone layer and rein in chemical pollution, among other things.

UNEA-6 also saw youth step up, with environmental activist Grace Catapang from the Philippines **decrying** the “devastating injustices” caused by environmental degradation.

Climate action

UNEP is supporting countries as they implement the Paris Agreement, transition to a low-carbon future and adapt to climate change.



A photograph of a man in traditional indigenous attire, including a beaded necklace and a headband, standing in a forest. He is looking upwards and to the right. The background is filled with trees and foliage.

Brazil's Puyanawa Indigenous People use traditional farming techniques, including the planting of hardwood trees, to counter deforestation, a major driver of climate change. Photo: UNEP

Harnessing science to address the climate crisis

The **Emissions Gap Report 2024** found that the world must promise and deliver 42 per cent off annual greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 in the next round of countries' climate pledges, known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). If they do not, the Paris Agreement goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C by 2100 will not be achievable. Based on current policies, a devastating temperature rise of 2.6°C–3.1°C this century is projected. The report called for big emitters in the G20 to do most of the heavy lifting.

The **Adaptation Gap Report 2024** called for a massive increase in financial support for developing nations contending with droughts, floods and other climate-related shocks. The report was cited in a **landmark decision** at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP29) to triple climate-related finance for developing countries. Leaders from Bulgaria, Kenya and Tonga, among others, referenced the gap reports during COP29. Together, the publications were featured in 3,000-plus news stories across over 90 countries.

Resourcing the Energy Transition presented seven principles and five actionable recommendations designed to ensure justice, equity and sustainability in minerals development and a circular supply of critical energy transition minerals. The report's recommendations, if followed across extraction, trade, use and disposal of minerals and metals, can help to lower emissions, protect nature, reduce energy poverty, manage demand, address supply and increase benefit shares for producer countries and local communities. Recommended by the UN Secretary-General's Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals, the report informed the UN General Assembly, the **G20**, and UN summits on biodiversity and climate change.

UNEP's "gap" reports were featured in

3,000+

news stories across **90 countries**

According to the **Global Resources Outlook**, the extraction of natural resources has tripled in the past five decades, driving the triple planetary crisis. The report, which calls for sustainable resource management, was cited in a **resolution** on renewable energy by the Council of the European Union and mentioned in a UNEA-6 **resolution**.

The **Global Nitrous Oxide Assessment** showed how the world can cut 40 per cent off emissions of nitrous oxide, a potent greenhouse gas that also damages the ozone layer and pollutes the air. Cutting emissions could prevent 20 million premature deaths by 2050. The report's findings were featured at **COP29** and covered by global media.



In Colombia, UNEP supported the rollout of dozens of electric buses, most of which have been driven by women. The initiative is part of a UNEP effort to support 60 low- and middle-income countries as they make the leap to electric transport. *Photo: La Rolita*

Backing

Paris Agreement implementation

UNEP provided technical support to 64 nations as they produced their first biennial transparency reports, which chart how well nations are meeting their NDCs. Over the last few years, UNEP's transparency-related work has backed countries as they enhance the use of national climate data, build the capacity of national climate-reporting experts and establish systems to strengthen reporting bodies.

UNEP also supported over 30 countries in advancing implementation of their NDCs. UNEP's work supported Colombia as the nation created plans to scale up climate-related investments. UNEP's work also supported Morocco in forging roadmaps for low-carbon development and Viet Nam in designing mangrove restoration programmes. Through peer-learning forums, UNEP supported 120 countries in the preparation of their next NDCs, due in 2025.

UNEP supported 35 developing countries in advancing efforts to accelerate low-carbon development through initiatives drawing on over US\$200 million in grant funding from the Global Environment Facility, one of the financial mechanisms of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. By also mobilizing billions in co-financing from partners, countries have focused on electric mobility, energy efficiency, renewable energy and low-emission buildings. These initiatives are expected to benefit more than 17 million people and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by almost 300 million tonnes, the equivalent of taking 65 million cars off the road.



A fleet of electric motorcycle taxis make their debut in Thailand, where UNEP is supporting the country's transition away from petrol-burning vehicles. Photo: ENTEC

Reining in greenhouse gas emissions

UNEP supported 60 low- and middle-income countries as they developed programmes and policies to accelerate their transition to electric vehicles. In 2024, Antigua and Barbuda procured electric buses, India expanded charging infrastructure for electric two- and three-wheelers, and Kenya developed legislation that increased investments in electric motorcycles and buses. The work is part of a larger UNEP effort to back electric mobility in the Global South, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution. The effort comes amid a rapid transition towards electric mobility. In 2023, electric cars accounted for 18 per cent of new car sales globally, a **nearly tenfold increase** from five years earlier.

The UNEP-hosted Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN), which in 2024 celebrated its tenth anniversary, provided technical assistance to 26 countries. In Thailand, the CTCN advised the energy ministry as it formulated a national strategy for hydrogen power. In Kenya, the CTCN launched an effort to channel financing to 2 million small businesses interested in investing in climate-smart technology.

The Global Methane Pledge aims to reduce methane emissions by

30%
by 2030

The UNEP-convened Climate and Clean Air Coalition provided technical support to more than 30 countries as they developed roadmaps to reduce emissions of methane, a greenhouse gas with 80 times the warming power of carbon dioxide. Six of these roadmaps were finalized in 2024, adding to the 14 already published. The work backs the Global Methane Pledge, which aims to reduce methane emissions by 30 per cent by 2030 – a key measure to limit global warming.

In 2024, eight countries ratified the **Kigali Amendment** to the Montreal Protocol, which calls for the phase down of hydrofluorocarbons in the cooling industry. Limiting emissions of these greenhouse gases could curtail global warming by 0.5°C this century. With associated energy efficiency improvements, this could double to 1°C. The UNEP-hosted **Multilateral Fund** of the Montreal Protocol assisted 70 countries in their efforts to improve the energy efficiency of refrigeration and air-conditioning equipment.



Children in the Pacific island state Niue gather around newly installed weather monitoring equipment. The gear is helping meteorologists better forecast extreme weather and issue alerts to communities. *Photo: UNEP*

Supporting communities dealing with climate change

UNEP supported communities in 50 countries as they adapted to drought, rising seas and other climate impacts. That work – highlighted in a UNEP podcast, **Resilience** – is expected to benefit 3.5 million people and restore 241,000 hectares of land. Initiatives launched last year include a US\$60 million effort in Jordan to boost water security for 750,000 people.

In addition, three countries – Costa Rica, Nepal and Zimbabwe – finalized their national adaptation plans, with support from UNEP. The plans are designed to unlock public and private sector investment; Nepal's alone aims to generate US\$47 billion by 2050. In all, UNEP is assisting 30 countries in the development of national adaptation plans.

Meanwhile, **UNEP supported** six small island developing states – the Cook Islands, Niue, the Marshall Islands, Palau, Timor-Leste and Tuvalu – on early-warning systems for natural disasters. Niue tracked an April 2024 storm that brought heavy rains and gale force winds, Palau has begun to issue national ocean bulletins and Timor-Leste held community-level disaster simulations.

Financing

a low-carbon future

The UNEP Finance Initiative (UNEP FI) continued to support a large network of banks, insurers and investors in their efforts to address climate change.

The Net-Zero Banking Alliance, convened by UNEP FI, with more than 140 members across over 40 countries, saw the number of the lenders setting independent targets for reducing the carbon footprint of their financing efforts across power generation, real estate, transport and other sectors reach well over 100. Around two-thirds of members surveyed had put in place policies for coal, and oil and gas. One-third had policies on land use and deforestation. The alliance's members agreed to expand their net-zero targets to include capital market activities, the largest source of "financed emissions" for many banks.

The Net-Zero Asset Owner Alliance expanded to 89 members, which combined have nearly US\$10 trillion under management. In 2023, alliance members channelled US\$555 billion into climate-related solutions, up from US\$100 billion in 2020. Since the alliance's launch in 2019, members have driven down the emissions in their portfolios by roughly 6 per cent annually.

UN-REDD, a partnership that includes UNEP, advised 11 countries as they developed environmental and social safeguards that would allow them to access the global market for forest-based carbon trading. That market got a boost at COP29 when countries operationalized an article of the Paris Agreement that governs carbon trading. UN-REDD also provided technical support to seven countries seeking eligibility for more than US\$1 billion in results-based finance for protecting forests. Safeguarding those forests would prevent the release of 138 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, the equivalent of taking 30 million cars off the road, while delivering benefits for communities and biodiversity.

Women collect seeds in Sumatra, Indonesia. Villagers here are participating in a UN-REDD programme that allows them to earn money without felling local trees, a process key to countering climate change. *Photo: UNEP*

US\$555 billion

Amount the members of the UNEP FI-led Net-Zero Asset Owner Alliance channelled into climate-friendly solutions in 2023



The digital age

UNEP is using AI, satellite data and other cutting-edge technology to counter the triple planetary crisis.

One of UNEP's most successful efforts in the digital space is the **International Methane Emissions Observatory**, which uses satellite data and machine learning to detect methane leaks from oil and gas installations. The system notified companies and governments of 1,066 releases from 1 January to 30 September 2024. The alerts prompted action to plug major leaks in **Algeria** and **Nigeria**, preventing the release of greenhouse gases equivalent to those 1 million cars would produce over a year.



UNEP's Digital Accelerator Lab houses 20 cutting-edge digital tools,

including one that allows users to track the health of rivers, lakes and aquifers.

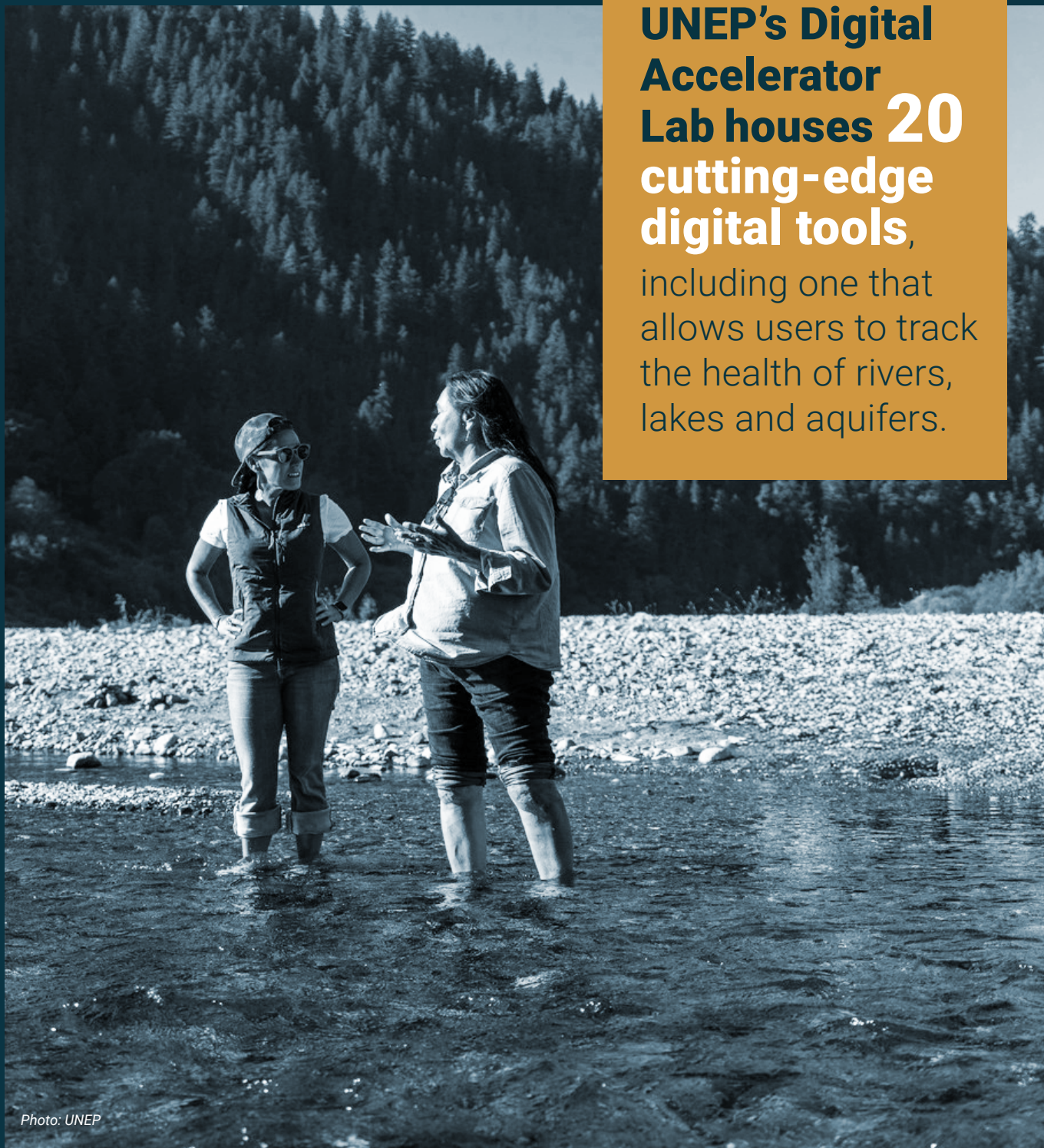


Photo: UNEP

The **Digital Accelerator Lab**, launched in May 2024, features 20 digital applications and prototypes. These include the **Freshwater Ecosystems Explorer**, which allows users to access high-resolution maps of lakes, rivers and other sources of freshwater, and track their extent over time. The **Strata platform** spotlights areas where environmental stressors, like climate change, overlap with conflict and socio-economic challenges, helping decision makers prioritize responses and foster peacebuilding.

UNEP is also working to ensure that new technologies do not harm the environment. Ahead of the UN General Assembly in September, UNEP released **Artificial Intelligence (AI) End-to-End**, which offered seven recommendations for minimizing AI's impact on the planet. Those included establishing global standards for measuring AI's environmental footprint.

Nature action

UNEP is working to reverse the unprecedented decline of the natural world, while supporting communities that depend on nature for their survival.



Championing

the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

UNEP scaled up support for countries as they initiate the implementation of the **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework** (GBF), a landmark 2022 agreement to halt and reverse the loss of nature.

UNEP supported 70 countries in updating their national biodiversity strategies and targets, which outline how countries will translate the agreement's goals into action. As of November 2024, 52 UNEP-supported nations had submitted their revised national biodiversity targets. In May 2024, UNEP and China launched the Kunming Biodiversity Fund, which will provide financial and technical support to developing countries for the implementation of the GBF. China has committed about US\$230 million to the fund, which has already approved projects in 15 countries.

The international community has made some headway on the GBF target to protect 30 per cent of the Earth by 2030, but progress needs to accelerate, found the **Protected Planet Report 2024**. Some 18 per cent of land and inland waters and 8 per cent of ocean and coastal areas are within documented protected and conserved areas. However, a land area roughly the size of Brazil and Australia combined and a sea area larger than the Indian Ocean still need to be designated by 2030 to meet the global target. The quality and representativeness of the ecosystems and biodiversity protected is crucial, the report said.

UNEP also supported the Brazilian G20 Presidency on the G20 Initiative on Bioeconomy, which promotes sustainable and inclusive economic growth through bioeconomic approaches. As part of this initiative, high-level principles were developed, providing a framework to ensure economic, social and environmental sustainability.



In Madagascar, UNEP is supporting local communities as they create sustainable livelihoods and protect forests and the biodiversity they contain. *Photo: UNEP*



Sonia Guajajara, Brazil's Minister of Indigenous Peoples, was named a UNEP Champion of the Earth for her efforts to protect biodiversity and solidify the territorial claims of Indigenous communities. *Photo: UNEP*

Safeguarding the natural world

UNEP is assisting 108 countries as they conserve, sustainably manage and restore their ecosystems – protecting wildlife and supporting Indigenous Peoples, who are the world's major stewards of biodiversity. UNEP also supports local communities and is enlisting the private sector in biodiversity conservation action. Thanks to UNEP's interventions, over 1.6 million hectares of terrestrial and marine areas are under improved management. Nearly 900,000 people are expected to benefit from UNEP's work on landscapes.

UNEP also supported the conservation and restoration of 2.3 million hectares of marine environments, including mangroves, coral reefs and seagrass meadows. That work spanned 53 countries and took place in some of the world's most sensitive bodies of water, including the Red Sea, Gulf of Mexico and the South Pacific Ocean. As one example, UNEP supported the Thai Ministry of Environment as it established a 900-hectare **marine safe haven** that protects a threatened species of crab crucial to local economies.

UNEP and the African Development Bank teamed up to produce the **Natural Capital Atlas of Africa**. The report catalogued the value of the continent's soil, water, minerals and other natural resources, supporting policymakers to make more informed development decisions. The atlas followed a request from African governments for strategies that make the continent's natural capital sustainable. It was designed to contribute to Agenda 2063, Africa's blueprint for becoming a global economic powerhouse.

During a **star-studded ceremony** at UNEA-6, UNEP and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN recognized seven World Restoration Flagships under the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. The efforts, from Pakistan to Peru, are expected to restore 40 million hectares and create 500,000 jobs.

Combatting

desertification

UNEP supported the marshalling of US\$80 million in funding for Africa's Great Green Wall, an effort to increase the amount of arable land across 8,000 km of the Sahel, a semi-arid region that spans Africa. The projects from that funding are expected to cover more than 6.9 million hectares and benefit 5 million people. In Iraq, 90 per cent of which is arid or semi-arid, UNEP supported the roll out of a national strategy to counter land degradation. In the countries of the South Caucasus, including Armenia and Georgia, UNEP is backing the restoration of 20,000 hectares of degraded drylands, work that is expected to benefit 15,000 people.

World Environment Day showcased solutions to drought, desertification and land degradation, spurring people around the world to act on these mounting threats. Saudi Arabia hosted the official celebrations on 5 June, while 4,000 other events took place in 150-plus countries. #WorldEnvironmentDay was the top trending hashtag on X, while political leaders and celebrities, from Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to actor Leonardo DiCaprio, voiced their support for ecosystem restoration. UNEP's World Environment Day-related content was viewed 421 million times across social media, while the celebration was mentioned by press in 178 countries.

At the sixteenth Conference of Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, nations launched the Riyadh Action Agenda, which saw US\$12 billion committed in loans and grants for land restoration and drought resilience initiatives. Also launched was the Riyadh Global Drought Resilience Partnership, which will work to leverage finance in support of 80 of the most vulnerable and drought-hit countries around the world.

Abdullah Ibrahim Alissa and other conservationists are greening parts of Saudi Arabia's Thadiq National Park in an ambitious bid to stop desertification. *Photo: UNEP*



Restoration boosts livelihoods, lowers poverty and builds resilience to extreme weather – supporting the Sustainable Development Goals.

Inger Andersen

UNEP Executive Director





Women meet in Pakistan's Hunza Valley, where community members are restoring ailing ecosystems around the Indus River in an effort to counter flooding. The UN recognized the initiative as a World Restoration Flagship. Photo: UNEP

Fostering healthy freshwater ecosystems

UNEP worked to protect, conserve and restore the world's lakes, rivers and aquifers, which are under mounting pressure from the triple planetary crisis.

UNEP joined the UN-Water community to launch the UN System-Wide Strategy on Water and Sanitation. UNEP and UN Water co-produced the **Mid-Term Status Report on Sustainable Development Goal 6 Indicators**, which set out recommendations for decision makers. The report found that half of countries are seeing freshwater ecosystems degrade and that river flows are slowing in 402 basins, including those that house the Congo, Parana and Volga rivers.

UNEP scaled up its country-level work, supporting the sustainable management of watersheds in Brazil and India, and the conservation of peatlands in the Congo Basin. UNEP also advanced a partnership with **Rotary International** to train its 1.4 million members as citizen scientists and track the health of freshwater bodies.

Alongside multiple partners, UNEP launched the Baku Dialogue on Water for Climate Action – a series of discussions among nations designed to elevate the role of water in climate action.

Financing

biodiversity

In 2024, 22 signatories joined the UNEP FI-led **Principles for Responsible Banking**, which supports banks as they align their core business with the Sustainable Development Goals and environmental accords like the GBF. More than 350 lenders – representing half of the world’s banking assets – have adopted the principles and are putting sustainable finance targets in place.

Meanwhile, the **Global Fund for Coral Reefs** financed efforts to protect 1.7 million hectares of coral reefs, which are under threat from multiple stressors, in 13 countries. The fund supported Indonesia in launching a landmark US\$35 million debt-for-nature swap, Mexico in countering a seaweed epidemic that is smothering coral reefs and the Philippines in improving the management of marine protected areas. The fund’s work in 2024 is expected to benefit around 15,000 people through training and job creation. UNEP is the global monitoring and evaluation lead for the fund and co-chair of its executive board.

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We are the first generation to fully understand the **immense threats to the land** – and might be the last one with a chance to reverse the course of destruction.

Elizabeth Maruma Mrema
UNEP Deputy Executive Director

In Mexico, UNEP is helping conservationists raise king crabs. The animals are voracious consumers of algae, which is infesting sensitive coral reefs as the ocean warms due to climate change. *Photo: UNEP*



Bridging the gender divide

Women at the centre of environmental action

The triple planetary crisis weighs heavily on women, deepening gender inequality and trapping millions in poverty. To counter that, UNEP proactively ensures that women participate equally in environmental restoration while creating economic opportunities that make people more resilient to climate change.





With UNEP support, a group of green startups in Asia has raised

US\$350 million in funding

since 2021

UNEP supported communities around the world, including those in Cambodia, as they ramped up their use of renewable energy. *Photo: UNEP*

UNEP supported dozens of countries in integrating the principles of human rights and gender equality into their national biodiversity strategies and worked with nations under the **Global Framework on Chemicals** to integrate gender-related considerations into the management of hazardous chemicals and waste.

UNEP and UN Women continued the rollout of **a programme** that provides support to women in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Viet Nam as they access finance and purchase clean-energy technologies. The effort is expected to benefit 100,000 people.

UNEP and partners also launched the latest round of **an accelerator** for green start-ups in Asia-Pacific. Since 2021, the accelerator has supported 100 businesses, including 30 run by women. Those firms have gone on to raise a combined US\$350 million.

Those successes come from UNEP's efforts to mainstream gender across its programme of work. Initial results indicate that 94 per cent of UNEP projects designed in the first half of 2024 integrated gender well, based on a comprehensive metric used by the UN.

Pollution action

UNEP is assisting nations to phase out hazardous chemicals, limit all forms of pollution and forge more circular economies.



Taking on plastic pollution

Humanity produces more than 400 million tonnes of plastic each year, much of which ends up in the environment. Throughout 2024, UNEP led a global movement to end this plastic pollution, which is a mounting threat to human and planetary health. UNEP provided technical support to over 30 countries as they developed regulations to reduce plastic pollution at its source, improve the design of products, scale up reuse and refill systems, and bolster waste management practices.

In the first programme of its kind, UNEP advised 12 countries in the early stages of developing extended producer responsibility (EPR) policies, which make producers responsible for plastic packaging throughout its life cycle. The effort is designed to raise recycling rates and improve product design, reducing plastic pollution.

Some 40 countries now have EPR schemes up and running. In India, UNEP is supporting the rollout of bans on certain single-use plastics and assisting in the implementation of national EPR guidelines. More than 45,000 companies have joined the EPR initiative.

The UNEP-hosted Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions provided technical assistance to 53 nations as they sought to better manage plastic waste. This led to the creation of waste management hubs in South Africa, the development of a regional policy on single-use plastic in Southeast Asia, and the launch of programmes to teach children in Sri Lanka about the dangers of plastic pollution.

Finally, 180 investors, banks and insurers, representing US\$17 trillion in assets, signed the UNEP FI-backed **Finance Statement on Plastic Pollution**, encouraging countries to agree a deal to end plastic pollution.

Plastic pollution negotiations make headway

In December, countries moved closer to finalizing a legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution. During talks in Busan, Republic of Korea, representatives from more than 170 nations agreed to a **Chair's Text** that will serve as the starting point for renewed negotiations in 2025. "It is clear that the world still wants and demands an end to plastic pollution," said UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen. "We need to ensure we craft an instrument that hits the problem hard instead of punching below its potential weight."



Participants attend talks in Busan, Republic of Korea designed to forge a legally binding global agreement to end plastic pollution. Photo: UNEP



Medical doctors, pharmacists, physicians, veterinarians and zoologists from 14 countries developed a campaign to help young people counter antimicrobial resistance. *Photo: Quadripartite Working Group on Youth Engagement for AMR*

Reducing air and chemical pollution

In Kenya, UNEP supported the installation of air pollution sensors at Nairobi's main airport. Combined with meteorological data, these sensors allowed officials to warn residents more accurately about surges in airborne toxins, like PM10, nitrous oxide and sulfur dioxide. The model is being replicated in Timor-Leste. In Yaoundé, Cameroon, sensors helped identify open dumpsites that were major sources of air pollution.

The Stockholm Convention, whose secretariat is hosted by UNEP, added two potentially toxic chemicals commonly found in plastic to its list of persistent organic pollutants (POPs), which now stands at 34 items. Celebrating its twentieth anniversary in 2024, the convention is designed to protect people and the environment from POPs, including those known as "forever chemicals".

The Secretariat of the Basel Convention, also hosted by UNEP, supported 40 nations as they prepared for new rules that prohibit the export of electronic waste to countries that have not provided their prior informed consent. The requirement, which came into effect on 1 January 2025, is important to control this fast-growing type of hazardous waste.

UNEP also assisted more than 22 countries in stemming the flow of pollution, from nitrogen to plastics, into the sea from land-based sources. UNEP provided technical advice to Sri Lanka and Trinidad and Tobago as they developed national plans for reducing nitrogen pollution. UNEP supported the development of national source inventories on plastics, which will inform the development of strategies and plans in 19 countries. Finally, UNEP worked with communities in Saba, Malaysia on wastewater treatment solutions.

UNEP continued to play an important role in the global response to antimicrobial resistance (AMR), which new data suggests could claim 39 million lives from 2025 to 2050. As part of the **Quadripartite partnership on AMR**, UNEP supported countries in their efforts to prevent the release of antimicrobials, and drug-resistant organisms and genes, into the environment, focusing on sectors from pharmaceuticals to agriculture. This comes amid a global push to counter AMR. The UN General Assembly adopted a **political declaration** calling for a more concerted effort to address the threat and recognizing the leading role of the Quadripartite in crafting a response. That was reiterated in a **ministerial conference on AMR**.

Building

circular economies and societies

UNEP advised regulatory bodies in Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico and Paraguay as they launched Latin America's first eco-labelling programme. This includes a certification for products that meet high sustainability standards throughout their entire life cycle. The initiative is expected to assist 450 million consumers in making more-informed purchasing decisions.

In addition, UNEP supported Mauritius in rolling out a circular economy roadmap. Mauritius is one of seven African nations – along with Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa and Uganda – that UNEP has supported as part of an initiative to foster sustainable consumption and production. In the last decade, the initiative has helped to divert 25,000 tonnes of waste from landfills and create about 20,000 jobs.

Under the **Global Framework on Chemicals**, UNEP is collaborating with partners to identify ways to reduce pollution from a range of industries, including textiles, agriculture and construction. That work is expected to be bolstered by the creation of a **science-policy panel** on chemicals, waste and pollution prevention, currently under negotiation.

Meanwhile, UNEP provided technical assistance to over 35 small textile companies in Africa as they developed plans to improve sustainability. At the global level, TikTok, which has over 1 billion users, is developing a training programme for content creators based on UNEP's **Sustainable Fashion Communication Playbook**, which is designed to counter overconsumption.

Gazing into the future

How UNEP uses foresight to prepare for the environmental challenges of tomorrow.

UNEP released **Navigating New Horizons**, which identified eight critical global shifts, including the emergence of digital technologies, that have major implications for our shared environment. The report is part of UNEP's growing efforts to anticipate and prepare for future challenges and opportunities.



Responding to **disasters** and conflict

UNEP provided technical support to foster peace and sustainable development through environmental action.

UNEP supported countries struggling to cope with devastating environmental consequences caused by war and conflict. In Gaza, a landmark UNEP environmental assessment found that conflict has caused “unprecedented” levels of pollution, with sewage, debris and toxic munitions contaminating soil, water and the air. The report notes that environmental degradation is contributing to human suffering and risks irreversible damage to Gaza’s ecosystems.



39 million tonnes

Amount of debris generated by the war in Gaza through July 2024, according to a UNEP environmental assessment



A UNEP environmental assessment found the conflict in Gaza has led to “unprecedented” levels of pollution. Photo: AFP

UNEP and the UN Development Programme are providing technical support as the people of Gaza attempt to clear and manage the estimated 50 million tonnes of debris. The project is expected to open key humanitarian access routes that would benefit up to 200,000 people and establish the first debris recycling centre in Gaza.

This follows efforts in Mansuriya Village, Iraq, where more than 60,000 tonnes of conflict-related debris were removed, paving the way for hundreds of people to return home after almost a decade. Some of that rubble went into Iraq’s first road made from recycled debris. In 2024, the **mobile debris system was handed over to Kirkuk Governate** by UNEP and the International Organization for Migration as part of efforts to build long-term circularity.

Meanwhile, experts deployed through the UNEP-UN Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs **Joint Environment Unit** supported seven countries as they navigated the aftermath of environmental disasters, including Ethiopia (landslides), Guinea (chemical explosion) and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (hurricane). Last year marked the unit’s thirtieth anniversary. Since its launch, it has operated in 60 countries, conducting 45 environmental assessments and supporting 250 deployments of experts.

Striving for efficiency, effectiveness and impact

As part of its commitment to streamline UNEP's implementation machinery in the service of Member States, in 2024, UNEP continued to tightly monitor operational efficiency, effectiveness and impact.

Portfolio dashboards with a set of performance trackers are extensively used by Directors and teams, while the Senior Management Team holds Quarterly Business Review (QBR) meetings. The QBR uses a "traffic light system" to track portfolio performance, funds utilization, donor and implementing partner management, audit and evaluation and related management issues.





UNEP onboarded the first cohort of Young Talent Pipeline at the Headquarters in Nairobi on 29 January 2024. Photo: UNEP

A high performing team that reflects the United Nations

UNEP works in strict accordance with Article 101/3 of the UN Charter which provides that the paramount consideration in the employment of staff and in the determination of the conditions of service shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity. The Article further stresses that due regard shall be paid to the importance of recruiting staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible.

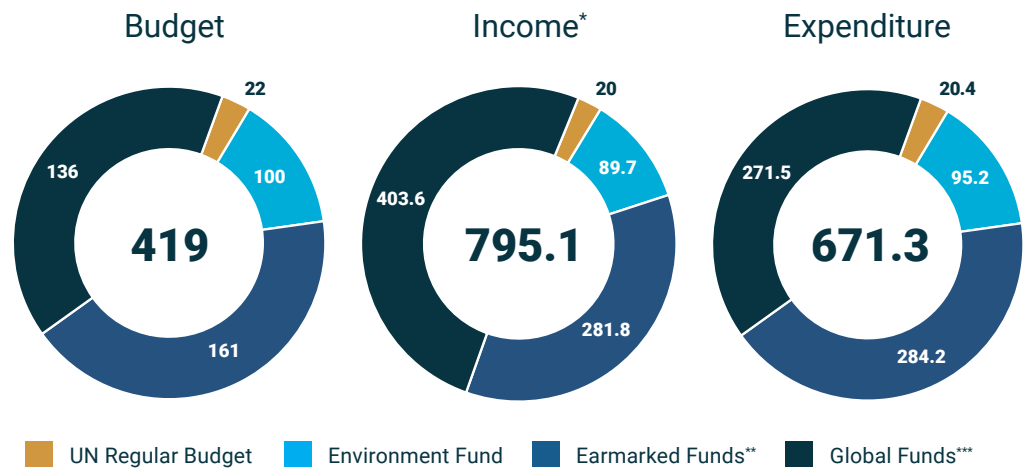
Pursuant to this goal, UNEP held over 30 talent outreach events around the world to engage potential candidates from across regions. Through these outreach events, UNEP reached more than 16,500 potential applicants, establishing UNEP as a leader in talent outreach within the UN Secretariat.

UNEP also welcomed the first cohort of the **Young Talent Pipeline**, which aims to attract high talent junior professionals from regions where young people might not typically consider applying for a UNEP Headquarters job. A second cohort is in the final selection phase.

Consistent outreach for top talent is yielding early results. The number of professional-level staff from less-represented geographical regions jumped 10 per cent between 2023 and 2024.

To keep pace with today's environmental challenges, UNEP is broadening its funding base and with additional emphasis on efficient and robust fund management. In 2024, 94 Member States contributed to the Environment Fund, the foundation of UNEP's work. In addition, three UNEP Planetary Funds – focused on climate, nature and pollution – are delivering tangible impacts on the ground, demonstrating the transformative power of strategic investment. Additional earmarked funds from governments, multilateral partners and others also supported the expansion of UNEP's work.

Financial status as of December 2024 (US\$ million)



* The income figures are provisional and subject to completion and closure of UNEP annual financial accounts.
 **Earmarked Funds include Planetary Funds (Belgium, Czechia, Norway, the Philippines) and other softly earmarked funds (Sweden).
 *** Global funds represent Global Environment Facility and Green Climate Fund.

Top-15 Earmarked contributors in 2024 (US\$ million)

UN agencies	95.2
Germany	47.8
European Commission	37.6
UNEP Finance Initiative*	22.9
United States of America (the)	10.6
Denmark	9.1
Japan	8.5
Sweden	7.6
Italy	5.9
Foundation/Non-governmental organizations	5.2
Switzerland	5.0
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (the)	4.1
Belgium	3.4
Norway	3.3
Finland	3.0

Top-15 Environment Fund contributors in 2024 (US\$ million)

Norway	12.2
Netherlands (Kingdom of the)	10.3
Germany	8.0
France	7.6
Denmark	7.4
United States of America (the)	7.2
Sweden	5.1
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (the)	4.7
Belgium	4.3
Switzerland	3.8
Italy	3.3
Canada	2.3
Finland	1.6
Japan	1.4
Spain	1.4

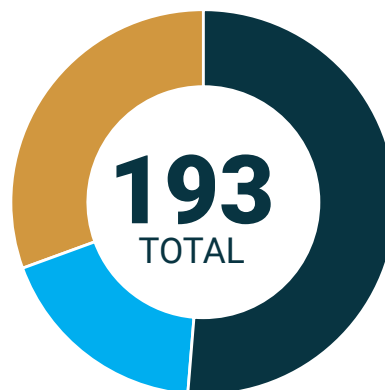
*Partnership between UNEP and the global financial sector to mobilize private sector finance for sustainable development.

Contributors to Environment Fund in 2024 by category (number of Member States)

59 Full share* contributors

35 Other contributors

99 Non-contributors



*Full share of the Environment Fund budget as per the voluntary indicative scale of contributions, established by the Member States.

Full share contributors

Albania	Madagascar
Armenia	Maldives
Bahamas (the)	Malta
Barbados	Mauritius
Belgium	Monaco
Belize	Mongolia
Bhutan	Montenegro
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Morocco
Cabo Verde	Nauru
Cyprus	Nepal
Denmark	Netherlands (Kingdom of the)
Dominica	New Zealand
Dominican Republic (the)	Norway
Eswatini	Oman
Fiji	Palau
France	Peru
Gambia (the)	Philippines (the)
Georgia	Saint Kitts and Nevis
Grenada	Saint Lucia
Guyana	Saudi Arabia
Iceland	Serbia
Iraq	Slovenia
Ireland	Somalia
Italy	Sri Lanka
Jamaica	Sweden
Jordan	Tajikistan
Kenya	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (the)
Latvia	Uruguay
Lithuania	Vanuatu
Luxembourg	

Other contributors

Andorra	Malaysia
Australia	Mexico
Austria	Micronesia (Federated States of)
Bangladesh	Pakistan
Botswana	Paraguay
Bulgaria	Portugal
Cambodia	Republic of Korea
Canada	Singapore
China	Slovakia
Croatia	South Africa
Czechia	Spain
Finland	Switzerland
Germany	Thailand
Hungary	Trinidad and Tobago
Indonesia	Uganda
Japan	United States of America (the)
Kazakhstan	Viet Nam
Kuwait	

UNEP is grateful to all funding partners. **Each contribution matters**, for people and planet.

Special thanks to UNEP's funding partners. For more than 50 years, UNEP has served as the leading global authority on the environment, mobilizing action through scientific evidence, raising awareness, building capacity and convening stakeholders. UNEP's core programme of work is made possible by flexible contributions from Member States and other partners to the Environment Fund and UNEP Planetary Funds. These funds enable agile, innovative solutions for climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste.

Support UNEP. Invest in people and planet.
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