

Technical Workshop

Mainstreaming Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) Objectives in the United Nations Country Teams to Catalyse Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) transitions

4th to 6th March 2025

Gaborone, Botswana

I. Background

Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) are pivotal instruments in advancing the environmental dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). MEAs provide a framework to address the interconnected global environmental challenges and crises including climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, which threaten ecosystems, human health, economic and social stability and cover one of the six SDG transitions that can have a catalytic and multiplier effect across the SDGs. Therefore, it is imperative to mainstream and coherently integrate the relevant MEAs objectives in national sustainable development and planning processes to contribute to a more sustainable and equitable future for all.

Since its inception in 2009, the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) MEA Programme has supported 49 African Countries to domesticate and implement MEAs which in turn contributes to national sustainable development aspirations. The programme has incrementally contributed towards addressing systemic challenges that impair MEA implementation in Africa, including lack of adequate technical capacities for MEA implementation, weak utilization of tools and approaches, incoherent policies hindering cross-sectoral collaborations, and weak rule of law that undermines enforcement efforts amongst others.

A recent internal analysis by UNEP has revealed that biodiversity and pollution commitments are weakly integrated in the Common Country Analyses (CCAs) and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UN-CFs). Integration of the climate action in the UN-CF result matrix (outcomes and outputs) accounted for 60.92%, whereas nature action, and pollution and waste accounted for 36.78% and 2.30%, respectively.

II. UN Development System Support to Integrate MEAs in CCAs and UN-CFs

Concerted efforts by the entire UN Development System (UNDS) are required to progressively support the mainstreaming of MEAs in UN Country Programming processes. To deliver on the 2030

Agenda, UNCTs can leverage the synergies and comparative advantages of MEAs to embed MEA implementation across national sustainable development planning and policy processes, linking these with relevant policy tools and strategies (e.g. National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans; chemicals and waste management and pollution prevention strategies and plans); break siloes across government departments working on different MEAs and sustainable development issues; and offer regional peer learning opportunities to encourage countries to learn from one another to advance on their national priorities, especially in geographical contexts with similar needs. To support these aspirations, it is crucial to advance coherent narratives at country level, which can account for a UN-wide perspective for the best country support that connects various areas of work of the UNCT. The UN Common Approach to Biodiversity (2021) and Pollution (2022) – can help address this important need, representing a “One-UN” voice that can promote the strategic and coherent inclusion of biodiversity and pollution issues across the work of Regional Coordinators and UNCTs and influence horizontal policy processes as well as vertical integration at country level.

In response to these overarching needs, resolution 6/6¹ of the UN Environment Assembly tasked the UN Environment Programme to: **“facilitate coherent and effective implementation of multilateral environmental agreements at the regional and national levels on a Member State-driven basis, including through the Fifth Montevideo Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law [...]; strengthen cooperation [with] United Nations country teams and encourage the latter to mainstream the objectives of multilateral environmental agreements into their work,”** giving UNEP a renewed mandate to promote the mainstreaming and implementation of MEAs across the UN Development System.

III. The need for a SADC Sub-Regional Technical Workshop

In the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, Eswatini and South Africa will soon commence their CCA and UN-CF development cycles for the years 2026-2030. These two countries requested UNEP for assistance with these processes, to ensure they adequately reflect the environmental dimension of sustainable development. This offers an important opportunity for UNEP to extend the assistance offered to other countries and to promote the coherent mainstreaming of MEA implementation across the SADC Region, responding to the needs outlined in the previous sections.

In response to the above requests, the UNEP Regional Office for Africa (UNEP-ROA) and Law Division will facilitate a Technical Workshop in Gaborone, Botswana, from 4th to 6th March 2025. The

¹ <https://docs.un.org/en/UNEP/EA.6/Res.6>

technical workshop aims to advance on the catalytic role of MEAs in accelerating SDGs, promoting coherent policy and effective rule of law and sharing experiences to mainstream and integrate MEAs implementation within the CCA and Cooperation Framework, as well as national sustainable development planning and policy processes in four countries in the SADC region. The workshop will promote South-South and Triangular Cooperation, facilitating lesson sharing and best practice that could be replicated in other countries of the SADC Region and beyond. In addition, the workshop will facilitate exchanges on how the development of national legal frameworks and knowledge products could increasingly support the implementation of the MEAs. In this regard, the opportunities for obtaining support through the Montevideo Programme will be elaborated.

The workshop is also in line with the memorandum of understanding between UNEP and the Southern African Development Community Secretariat to support strengthening regional environmental governance in the implementation of MEAs in the SADC region.

IV. Objectives of the Workshop

The overall objective of the Technical Workshop is to improve the capacity of four target countries to reflect the relevant objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the Global Framework on Chemicals and the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions into national sustainable development planning and policy processes, whilst ensuring their uptake and mainstreaming across CCAs and CF.

The workshop is expected to achieve the following specific objectives:

- a) Strengthen the capacities of the four countries to advance MEA implementation across national sustainable development planning and policy processes, linking these with relevant policy tools and strategies (e.g. National Biodiversity Strategies and Action plans; Pollution-related strategies and national implementation plans) and related updates.
- b) Contribute to breaking siloes across government departments in these countries working on MEAs and sustainable development issues, fostering interministerial and multi-stakeholder perspectives necessary to advance a “whole of government” and “whole of society” approach towards MEA implementation;
- c) Strengthen capacities on the development of national legal frameworks, ensure the implementation of the MEAs and how the strengthened cooperation between the MEA focal points on the one hand, and national focal points for Montevideo Programme on the other hand to enhance MEA implementation.

- d) Promote regional peer learning across the countries to advance MEA including through the development of case studies.
- e) Promote collaboration among national MEA focal points and UNCTs to ensure cohesive efforts in mainstreaming MEAs in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and Common Country Analysis,

V. Expected Outcomes

- a) Participants improve their technical skills and knowledge to integrate MEA implementation into national sustainable development planning and policy processes, leading to more effective implementation strategies that contribute to updated National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and pollution-related strategies and plans.
- b) A set of actionable recommendations is produced to guide the countries in integrating MEAs into their UN-CF and CCA development cycles, with a focus on enhancing SDG outcomes, taking Eswatini and South Africa as case studies.
- c) Enhanced collaboration between national MEA focal points and UNCT Focal Points results in joint ownership for increased and coherent MEA mainstreaming as well as increased knowledge and understanding of the two UN Common Approaches.
- d) Increased understanding of how the development of national legal frameworks, ensure the implementation of the MEAs and how the strengthened cooperation between the MEA focal points on the one hand, and national focal points for Montevideo Programme on the other hand to enhance MEA implementation.
- e) A compilation of best practices and successful case studies related to integration of MEAs within national sustainable development planning in the SADC Region is developed, providing a resource for future initiatives and country programming.
- f) Increased understanding of how the development of national legal frameworks, ensure the implementation of the MEAs and contribute to the achievement of SDGs and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

VI. Target Audience

The workshop is targeting the following four SADC countries, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho and South Africa. These countries have been selected as they are in the process of revising their UN cooperation frameworks. These countries are also Parties to the selected MEAs covered in this workshop. Participants to the workshop will include UNCT focal points, Montevideo focal points, CBD national focal points and BRS national points who will provide a more substantive and practical engagement with their UNCT focal points in the workshop.

VII. Partners

In addition to UNEP, the workshop is being organised in collaboration with the SADC Secretariat, the BRS Secretariat and the CBD Secretariat.

VIII. Dates and Venue

The technical workshop will be held from the 4th to 6th March 2025 in Gaborone, Botswana.