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**International environmental policy and
governance issues: coordination across the
United Nations system on environmental issues**

**Coordination across the United Nations system in the field of
the environment, including the Environment Management
Group**

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), as stated in its founding mandate and reaffirmed in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development,¹ promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system.

The present report, prepared in response to resolution 1/11 of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP on coordination across the United Nations system in the field of the environment, including the Environment Management Group, describes how UNEP has worked to enhance its voice and ability to fulfil its coordination mandate within the United Nations system by strengthening its engagement in key United Nations coordination bodies; leading efforts to formulate system-wide strategies on the environment; and strengthening its regional presence to better serve the needs of Member States, including at the national level.

The first part of the report, which highlights the work of the Environment Management Group (section II), responds to the requests of the Environment Assembly to the Executive Director in resolution 1/11 regarding the development of system-wide strategies on the environment; proposals for integrating the outcome of the post-2015 development agenda into the environmental work of the United Nations; recommendations to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of the Environment Management Group; and other issues that need to be brought to the attention of the Environment Assembly at its second session, including on the work and progress of the Environment Management Group.

* Reissued for technical reasons on 3 May 2016.

** UNEP/EA.2/1.

¹ United Nations General Assembly resolution 66/288, “The future we want”.

The second part of the report (section III) covers United Nations system coordination in the field of the environment in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; the role of UNEP in other thematic coordination mechanisms at the global level; and the work undertaken by UNEP through regional and national coordination mechanisms. Following the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and, especially, through the Sustainable Development Goals negotiation process, United Nations system-wide cooperation and collaboration have grown organically out of the needs and requests of the Member States. Further examples of how UNEP has worked with a wide range of coordination mechanisms and strategies to meet the demand for United Nations system-wide policy coherence in addressing environmental matters with a view to more coordinated and effective activities are provided in document UNEP/EA.2/INF/14.

I. Introduction

1. The scope and ambition of the universal and integrated 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals are as unprecedented as the challenges that the international community will need to address to secure a sustainable future for all. Only by mobilizing all United Nations entities to contribute to the endeavour, with each bringing to the table its strengths, capacities and resources, can the United Nations system do justice to the aspirations of – and optimally support efforts to attain – the goals of the 2030 Agenda,² which demands enhanced, sophisticated and agile collaboration across the system.
2. This will demand enhance, sophisticated and agile collaboration across the United Nations system. The highly complex and multidimensional 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for integration across the three dimensions of sustainable development and spans the pillars of the United Nations Charter: development, peace and security, and human rights and humanitarian action. The ability to cut across those domains and pursue joint objectives and integrated outcomes is a critical success factor. Coalescing around a common set of goals, targets and means of implementation and collaboratively formulating coherent, coordinated responses will enable United Nations system organizations to address the complexity of the new agenda and deliver more robust and sustainable results.
3. Coordination in a time of integration means drawing on the comparative advantages of the United Nations system's diversity and specialization, working in collaboration and delivering as one. The United Nations system needs to be a responsive and agile provider of integrated, specialized support to Member States, effectively operationalizing normative frameworks in a coherent and collective system-wide effort. Closer coordination will result from the fostering and active promotion of a culture of collaboration within and between United Nations organizations, and from demonstrating the value of pooling capacity and knowledge to configure and deliver integrated more effective and cost-effective solutions. The Secretary-General of the United Nations and the members of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination have consistently recognized the importance of such a delivery approach.
4. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development offers a tremendous opportunity to enhance coordination across the United Nations system in the field of the environment. Environment is a shared responsibility of the system and UNEP, as its environmental authority and voice, has a founding mandate to help others to assume their share of the responsibility.³ Fostering system-wide coordination and collaboration has been integral to the mandate, work and organizational culture of UNEP.
5. The present report seeks to show how UNEP, working through a range of coordination mechanisms and strategies, has responded to calls for United Nations system-wide policy coherence in addressing environmental matters for more coordinated and effective activities. Examples are given to illustrate how it works within – and as part of – the United Nations system, differentiating diverse levels and modes of engagement to facilitate and leverage coordinated approaches and synergies and consolidating the system's support for the delivery of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. Other examples illustrate its collaborative work with the secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements, including through programmatic cooperation and the promotion of synergies, as described in greater detail in the report of the Executive Director on the relationship between UNEP and the multilateral environmental agreements

² United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/1, “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

³ United Nations General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 15 December 1972, on institutional and financial arrangements for international environmental cooperation.

(UNEP/EA.2/11). Additional information on the ways in which UNEP works with its United Nations system partners is provided in the annexes to document UNEP/EA.2/INF/14.

II. Highlights of the work of the United Nations Environment Management Group

A. Introduction

6. One of the specific objectives of the United Nations Environment Management Group is to assist UNEP in carrying out its functions related to the promotion of coordinated approaches to environmental issues in the United Nations system. In undertaking its work, the secretariat of the Environment Management Group has continued its close cooperation with the secretariats of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and its subsidiary bodies to ensure that environmental issues are brought to the highest level of coordination in the United Nations system and to encourage synergies for further follow-up and implementation.

7. The senior officials of the Environment Management Group, at their twenty-first meeting, in September 2015, reiterated that the Sustainable Development Goals provided an essential opportunity to integrate the environment as a universal, cross-sectoral, theme at both the global and national levels, in both developed and developing countries. The Environment Management Group should contribute to a better understanding of the environmental dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals, supporting its members in their efforts to align their institutions, programmes and policies with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Furthermore, the senior officials stated that the Environment Management Group could help to provide a perspective on the progress of the United Nations system in that regard.

B. Issue management groups

8. The Issue Management Group on the Sound Management of Chemicals and Wastes has worked since January 2014 to prepare a contribution by the United Nations system in support of the 2020 goal on sound chemicals management. The Environment Management Group, in close cooperation with the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals, has published a synthesis report entitled “United Nations and sound chemicals management: coordinating delivery for Member States and sustainable development”. The report signals the importance of sound chemicals management to the broader sustainable development agenda, showcasing what has already been accomplished, recommending ways to secure synergies and indicating how the United Nations system can further assist Member States in achieving sound chemicals management. It includes a joint statement by the executive heads of Environment Management Group member bodies and a system-wide commitment to continuing to promote and raise the profile of sound chemicals management within the United Nations system.

9. UNEP updated Member States on progress at the second meeting of the Open-ended Working Group of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, the fourth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management and the 2015 meetings of the conferences of the parties to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.⁴ The outcomes of the Issue Management Group have included a set of key composite targets and indicators for sound chemicals and hazardous waste management, which served as joint United Nations system input for the work of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development process on the post-2015 development agenda.

10. The Consultative Process on Environmental and Social Sustainability has continued its work on a framework for advancing environmental and social sustainability in the United Nations system, piloting its implementation. The pilot process, launched in March 2015, was executed on a voluntary basis by seven United Nations entities: the International Fund for Agricultural Development, UNEP, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, the World Food Programme, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Office for Project Services. The objectives were to share lessons learned, understand the practical implications of implementing the framework and eventually improve the framework based on the experience gained during the pilot phase.

⁴ United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/1, “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

11. The process has helped United Nations entities to consider the aspects of environmental and social sustainability in their policies, programmes and operations. While most sustainability initiatives focus on environmental sustainability, social sustainability needs to be better understood. There is a strong willingness to learn from experience and to strengthen shared learning across the United Nations system, recognizing at the same time that agencies need tailored approaches to implement the framework. The pilot process provides an opportunity to identify a common basis for strengthening policy coherence. The senior officials of the Environment Management Group have requested the Consultative Process to continue its work to improve and strengthen the framework as the basis for a common approach to advancing environmental and social sustainability in the United Nations system.

12. The senior officials of the Environment Management Group have committed their organizations to intensifying their actions to move towards climate neutrality. The Issue Management Group on Environmental Sustainability Management in the United Nations System, through the UNEP “Sustainable United Nations” initiative, has continued to support this process in concrete ways.

13. A United Nations “road map towards climate neutrality by 2020” was submitted to the High-level Committee on Management for its consideration, outlining a number of steps that United Nations system entities will need to take, jointly and individually, to attain those goals. The fifth and sixth editions of “Moving towards a climate neutral UN: the UN system’s footprint and efforts to reduce it” were published in 2014 and 2015, including greenhouse gas emissions inventories from 64 United Nations entities. The web-based Greening the Blue campaign continues to engage staff and provide organizations with an opportunity to showcase their efforts in emissions reductions. The guide to carbon offsetting for United Nations organizations has been updated and a gap analysis on the inventory’s data quality and coverage in the United Nations system was completed in October 2015, by which time the facilities and operations of 21 United Nations system organizations were climate neutral, 14 had established emissions reduction strategies and 3 were implementing environmental management systems. Furthermore, the Environment Management Group in November 2015 submitted to the Chief Executives Board a technical note on achieving system-wide climate neutrality that highlights good practices from across the system.

14. A project to mainstream environmental management systems into the facilities and operations of United Nations system organizations was launched in October 2014, with support from the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency. A framework of milestones for environmental management systems was produced for United Nations organizations to use as guidance in implementing environmental management systems; a stocktaking exercise on the status of implementation of environmental management systems in United Nations organizations has been completed; and four United Nations offices have been selected as pilots for environmental management system implementation support.

15. The web-based Greening the Blue campaign continues to engage staff and provide organizations with an opportunity to showcase their efforts in emissions reductions. Visits to the website have increased significantly in the past year, with 177,885 sessions hosted between June 2014 and May 2015, and the Issue Management Group on the Sound Management of Chemicals has facilitated capacity-building for staff in areas such as sustainability reporting.

16. In 2011, the Environment Management Group established an approach to peer reviewing the environmental profiles of United Nations entities, and a pilot phase launched in early 2013 included reviews of UNEP, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the World Meteorological Organization. The peer review reports focused on corporate environmental management of facilities and operations, addressing issues such as greenhouse gas emissions (from travel and facilities), water and waste management and green meetings, and provided non-binding recommendations for improvement. A peer review body composed of 17 United Nations entities reviewed the reports and finalized the recommendations for each agency. An assessment of the pilot phase revealed that there was consensus on the usefulness of the process and support for its continuation. A second phase was initiated in September 2014, leading to a peer review of the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2015 and 2016 respectively. The peer review body is considering developing guidelines and best practices for conducting peer reviews as an additional output of the process.

17. The senior officials of the Environment Management Group, at their twenty-first meeting, decided to invite the International Telecommunication Union, UNEP and other interested entities in consultation with the Environment Management Group secretariat, to provide a proposal for an issue management group to focus on the coordination of work in the United Nations system on the growing problem of electronic waste (e-waste).

C. A United Nations system-wide framework of strategies on the environment

18. In response to United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 1/11, and in line with paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the senior officials of the Environment Management Group established a consultative process including representatives from 19 United Nations organizations to contribute to the preparation of system-wide strategies on the environment. As its first contribution, the consultative process provided inputs for a mapping report by UNEP on the environmental mandates and competencies of the United Nations system. On that basis, the consultative process participants agreed to prepare a United Nations system-wide framework of strategies on the environment, with a focus on achieving greater synergy, collaboration and coherence among United Nations organizations on the environment for sustainable development, making the most of the common agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals to facilitate the convergence of their existing and future organizational strategies on the environment.

19. The system-wide framework of strategies is intended to ensure the coherence of relevant policies and the effective coordination of the diverse services, activities and programmes provided by the United Nations system in the field of the environment, taking into account, inter alia, the Sustainable Development Goals and the objectives and legislative frameworks of multilateral environmental agreements. The framework will encompass, draw on and serve to structure a number of thematic issue-specific sub-strategies, including any already being implemented under the leadership of any United Nations entity. Enabling a system-wide perspective, the framework will support the work of the United Nations Environment Assembly to provide general policy guidance on environmental programmes within the United Nations system, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII) and taking into account the respective mandates and legislative and autonomous governing bodies of other United Nations entities.

20. A draft system-wide framework of strategies (UNEP/EA.2/INF/6) has been shared with the senior officials for their consideration and endorsement, upon which it will be brought to the attention of the Chief Executives Board and submitted, by the Chair of the Environment Management Group, to the United Nations Environment Assembly.

D. Maximizing the effectiveness of the Environment Management Group

21. In the context of the discussions on the post-2015 agenda, which offered opportunities for strengthening the coordination of the environmental dimension of sustainable development, the United Nations Environment Assembly, in its resolution 1/11, requested the Executive Director of UNEP as Chair of the Environment Management Group, in consultation with the Secretary-General and the Chief Executives Board, to identify possible measures to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of the Group, and to submit a report with recommendations to the Environment Assembly for consideration at its second session. At their twentieth meeting, the senior officials of the Environment Management Group established an interagency task team for that purpose.

22. The task team carried out a review of the Environment Management Group's terms of reference, modalities of work and, more broadly, effectiveness and fitness for purpose, resulting in the report entitled **"Maximizing the effectiveness of the Environment Management Group in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"**. The task team will continue its work by considering the report's recommendations and findings, looking into their possible implications as well as identifying short-term and long-term measures for enhancing the effectiveness of the Group in support of the 2030 Agenda.

23. Furthermore, the senior officials requested the task team to prepare a report on the implementation of the environmental dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals, including an analysis of possible synergies with the multilateral environmental agreements and how the environmental dimension could contribute to the achievement of the social and economic dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals. This analysis is being prepared and is due to be finalized in April 2016.

III. United Nations system coordination in the field of the environment in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

A. Role of UNEP in other thematic coordination mechanisms at the global level

24. In addition to the Environment Management Group, UNEP plays convening and leadership roles in a number of thematic coordination mechanisms that are active at the global level. As well as those described below, UNEP also provides substantive environment-related guidance through other thematic coordination mechanisms with which it is expected to align itself when implementing its programme of work as part of United Nations system-wide efforts to integrate normative and operational frameworks; document UNEP/EA.2/INF/14 (annex IV) provides examples of bilateral partnerships with UNEP that offer an additional operational modality for strengthening collaboration, pooling efforts and capitalizing on each partner's technical expertise and operational strengths.

25. UNEP convenes the Inter-agency Coordination Group for the **10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns**, which aims to ensure greater visibility for the 10-year framework of programmes as a key implementation mechanism for the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development; a coordinated, effective and substantive United Nations system contribution to the framework, respecting existing mandates and programmes of work while fulfilling its objectives, goals and functions through the implementation of its six programmes at all levels; and enhanced information-sharing and coordination among United Nations bodies to support Governments and other stakeholders in their efforts to shift to sustainable consumption and production patterns. Collaborating United Nations entities now serve as lead agencies for individual programmes, such as in the case of the World Tourism Organization, or as members of the Multi-stakeholder Advisory Committee, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Office for Project Services, the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization, and the United Nations University's Institute of Advanced Studies; some of the above are also engaged in developing large-scale framework implementation projects with a range of programme partners. A number of United Nations entities were strongly engaged in the broad multi-stakeholder consultation processes that culminated in the six programmes and a total of 18 United Nations entities are programme partners. Inter-agency Coordination Group meetings have also focused on the need to link the

Ten-year framework of programmes to the Sustainable Development Goals, leading to close collaboration with the United Nations Statistics Division on the issue of sustainable consumption and production indicators, supported by two previous UNEP discussion papers on the subject of sustainable consumption and production targets and indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals.

26. UNEP is a co-convenor of the United Nations Inter-agency Task Team on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals, which was created as an integral element of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism established by paragraph 70 of the outcome document of the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development",⁵ and paragraph 123 of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and was launched at the summit in September 2015. The Technology Facilitation Mechanism promotes coordination, coherence and cooperation within the United Nations system on science, technology and innovation-related matters while enhancing synergy and efficiency for capacity-building initiatives, among others. UNEP was one of the main drivers behind the creation of the informal working group on technology facilitation, the predecessor of the Inter-agency Task Team.

27. The Inter-agency Task Team is responsible for preparing the multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals and for the development and operationalization of an online platform on science, technology and innovation initiatives. It will address the cross-cutting role that science, technology and innovation in general – and environmentally sound technologies in particular – will play in the implementation of the Goals. It also enables UNEP to strengthen the links between its current technology-related activities, such as the Climate Technology Centre and Network, and its implementation efforts in the broader Sustainable Development Goal context. To date, member agencies of the Inter-agency Task Team, including UNEP, have continued to provide information for an initial mapping of science, technology and

⁵ United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/1, "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".

innovation initiatives and activities within the United Nations system. Future efforts will encompass substantive inputs to, inter alia, the multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation.

28. UNEP is working with the United Nations Statistics Division to support the work of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, which is composed of Member States and includes regional and international agencies as observers. The Inter-agency and Expert Group will provide a proposal for a global indicator framework – with associated global universal indicators – for consideration by the Statistical Commission in March 2016. Since its establishment, in March 2015, UNEP has been assigned the role of United Nations system coordination for indicator development and technical information, including metadata and methodology, for Goals 12 (sustainable consumption and production) and 13 (climate change).

29. The *Global Sustainable Development Report* is a United Nations system publication aiming to serve as input for strengthening the science-policy interface at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, and as a strong, evidence-based, instrument to support policymakers in promoting poverty eradication and sustainable development. UNEP was actively involved in preparing the 2015 edition by, among other things, making available its extensive range of assessments and seconding a professional staff member for 50 per cent of their time. Almost every chapter of the report benefitted from substantive expert inputs and comments from – and review by – UNEP technical divisions. UNEP is similarly involved in the 2016 edition and contributed to the discussions on emerging issues and peer review at the High-level Expert Group Meeting for the Global Sustainable Development Report in October 2015.

30. UNEP is working with the United Nations Statistics Division on the United Nations system data catalogue, the Sustainable Development Goals innovation platform, and is part of a partnership with ten other entities that is developing a project to strengthen the capacity of national statistical systems in developing countries to respond in a systematic and strategic manner to the increased demand for data resulting from the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals; its ongoing contribution to the Sustainable Development Goal global indicator framework and the *Global Sustainable Development Report* will ensure that those tools respond to countries' needs. UNEP continues to support national and global monitoring, follow-up and review through UNEP Live, which includes the UNEP Live Sustainable Development Goals portal, national reporting system and SDG Interface Ontology.

31. That level of engagement in substantive aspects of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on the part of UNEP is a continuation of its active role in the United Nations system-wide support for the earlier Open Working Group process. UNEP co-led several work streams and contributed to many other products of the United Nations System Task Team on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda, which brought together over 60 United Nations entities, agencies and international organizations. It supported the multi-stakeholder consultations led by Member States on the post-2015 agenda, providing analytical inputs, expertise and outreach and advocating the key principles for an integrated approach to the Sustainable Development Goals with diverse stakeholders, including the heads of multilateral environmental agreement secretariats and networks of country scientists and technical experts, under the leadership of the UNEP Chief Scientist and the Special Advisor to the Executive Director on the Post 2015 Development Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals. UNEP briefings and side events at sessions of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development and the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development served to strengthen coordination and collaboration with stakeholders ranging from Member States to United Nations system entities and civil society organizations. UNEP regional offices, through regular and special regional meetings, were instrumental in supporting Member States in discussing the environmental aspects of the new agenda.

B. Working through United Nations system coordination mechanisms at the regional level

32. At the regional level, UNEP works within and through regional bodies and United Nations coordination mechanisms, including the United Nations regional economic commissions and their regional coordination mechanisms and the regional teams and subsidiary mechanisms of the United Nations Development Group. UNEP regional offices anchor the delivery of the environment programme of the United Nations at the regional, subregional and national levels. UNEP has effectively strengthened its regional offices to respond to regional and country needs, engage Governments on environmental policy and governance, and coordinate with United Nations country teams in delivering as one United Nations and on United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks.

33. In the Asian-Pacific region, for example, UNEP co-chairs the Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on Environment and Disaster Management, through which it led the organization of an Association of South-East Asian Nations/United Nations meeting on post-2015 environmental planning in May 2015, at which it was agreed that a joint environment action plan would be developed for the period 2016–2020. In the report of the Thematic Working Group, entitled “Towards a green economy for sustainable development and poverty reduction: an Asia-Pacific perspective”, UNEP highlighted the potential for promoting a green economy through commercial services, information and telecommunications and public services and facilities. Drawing on the report of the Inquiry into the Design of a Sustainable Financial System, entitled “The financial system we need: aligning the financial system with sustainable development”, UNEP has provided chapters on resource efficiency and financing for development for a new regional report to inform the discussions at to take place at a ministerial conference on environment and development in 2016.

34. Also in Asia and the Pacific, UNEP is a member of the United Nations Development Group Peer Support Group and was a lead resource on the Sustainable Development Goals, facilitating sessions on the Goals at United Nations country team retreats and regional United Nations meetings, which enabled it to highlight the integrated approach through key initiatives such as the Poverty-Environment Initiative and the Partnership for Action on Green Economy. UNEP led the development of a methodology for national Sustainable Development Goal data assessments that was adopted by the Regional United Nations Development Group team for Asia and the Pacific and is included as a global planning tool in the United Nations Development Group guidance on mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support; national data assessments provide UNEP with an entry point for sharing work on resource efficiency and sustainable consumption and production indicators with national statistics offices. UNEP also co-chaired a United Nations Development Group regional task team on mainstreaming climate change into United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks; the global guidance of the United Nations Development Group on the issue was subsequently adapted for the Asian-Pacific region and the support of United Nations system regional mechanisms was mobilized to deliver training at the country level.

35. In West Asia, UNEP collaborated with the United Nations Development Group team and regional coordination mechanism efforts to integrate environment into the consultations on the process leading to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including through the co-organization of the Arab High-Level Forum on Sustainable Development and the organization of a thematic session on the environmental dimension of sustainable development at the Arab Development Forum, in April 2013. UNEP and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, which convened the consultations in the Arab region, co-chair a thematic working group on the region’s transition following the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and are jointly preparing the first edition of the Arab Sustainable Development Report, which is scheduled for publication in early 2016.

36. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the UNEP regional office prioritized the mainstreaming of environmental sustainability into the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks of Cuba and El Salvador. In Mexico, inter-agency collaboration led by UNEP to implement the green economy outcome of that country’s United Nations Development Assistance Framework resulted in a number of joint initiatives with a range of stakeholders. Similarly, UNEP advanced the integration of climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and social protection in the Dominican Republic and, through its Poverty-Environment Initiative and Regional Gateway for Technology Transfer and Climate Change Action in Latin America and the Caribbean platform, provided support to the Government in its effort to include vulnerability variables in the definition of beneficiaries of social protection programmes. UNEP also leads biodiversity protection efforts through the Caribbean Biodiversity Corridor initiative, which has been developed with Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Haiti and which addresses social issues in vulnerable rural populations as an integrated approach to biodiversity conservation.

C. Working through United Nations system coordination mechanisms at the national level

37. UNEP seeks to place its knowledge and expertise at the service of national strategic priorities and frameworks and to contribute to the collective capacity of United Nations country teams, supporting the integration of the environmental dimension of sustainable development through innovative and catalytic country-driven initiatives and programming. UNEP provides a broad spectrum of services aimed at embedding environmental sustainability in United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks; more details on its contribution to the frameworks and joint programming at the national level are provided in document UNEP/EA.2/INF/14, on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of the United Nations General Assembly. In 2014, it covered 42 countries at various

stages in the development and implementation of their development frameworks, five of which fully incorporated environmental sustainability. By June 2015, United Nations country teams in three new countries had been trained in environmental sustainability and national environmental summaries had been developed in four new countries; joint projects with technical support and thematic working group participation had been undertaken in two new countries; United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks had been completed in 11 new countries; and country environmental sustainability mainstreaming programmes had been supported in four new countries. In total, 60 countries had been assisted by UNEP since the beginning of 2014.

38. By way of an example, UNEP support to the Government of Haiti has brought further achievements for sustainable development in the south of the country. In 2011, UNEP initiated a coalition of United Nations entities and partners called the Côte Sud Initiative with the aim of promoting the resilient development and economic growth of the coastal region. The decentralized coalition is designed to provide coordination, implementation and reporting support to the Government, in the “One United Nations” spirit, and is part of a United Nations integrated strategic framework. Several United Nations entities, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Office for Project Services, – and partners have joined the initiative, which UNEP has coordinated over the past five years. It is structured around five main interlinked thematic programmes: the *gouvernance sud*, *mer sud*, *terre sud*, *route sud* and *energie sud* programmes. A common identity developed for the Côte Sud Initiative in 2011 served to strengthen inter-agency synergy within the coalition and, once established, to project an image of integrated work from “ridge to reef”. The long-term commitment of UNEP to facilitating coordination in the field of environment and sustainable development at the subnational level has contributed significantly to the sustainability of results and to aid effectiveness.

39. The United Nations Economic and Social Council recognized the added value of United Nations entities joining forces to boost regional development in Haiti through the Côte Sud Initiative, stating in a 2014 report that “[b]y promoting sustainable development in the Southern Department, [the initiative] constitutes a ‘delivering as one’ experience at the local level which could usefully inspire other initiatives of the United Nations system at a wider scale”.

40. The coordination tools and associated integrated regional development dynamic generated through the Côte Sud Initiative and UNEP have now, after five years, been transferred to and incorporated by the Government, through the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Territorial Planning and Regional Authorities, and by the United Nations Resident Coordinator’s Office in Haiti. In 2015, UNEP and the Resident Coordinator’s Office developed a concept note entitled “Regional integrated mechanism for the south”, with the participation of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme, UN-Habitat and the United Nations Office for Project Services, which consolidated the results of the Côte Sud Initiative to support the Government and provided guidance to the United Nations country team at the subnational level.

IV. Conclusions: towards greater coherence for the work of the United Nations system in the field of the environment

41. The present report has highlighted how UNEP is executing its mandate to integrate environment across United Nations agendas, working collaboratively through the Environment Management Group and many other mechanisms, strategies and innovative partnerships to deliver better, more impactful, results and create synergies, strengthen collective action and maximize the potential for environmentally sound development.

42. Efforts to implement such integrated and coordinated approaches will need to be integral to the business model and organizational culture of UNEP and the United Nations system as a whole. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the outcomes of intergovernmental conferences, such as the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Paris, France, the third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan, and the upcoming United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) and World Humanitarian Summit, all demand that entities work as one United Nations team, delivering jointly on a common vision for sustainable development.

43. It is important to recognize that there are also limits to coordination and barriers to collaboration. The United Nations system was created as a system of functional units that enjoy a large degree of decentralization and, in some cases, autonomy. While that may have strengthened sectoral responses and often-needed technical specialization it has brought with it disparate lines of reporting, accountability and financing. Coordinated action in this complex institutional landscape is based on

the commonality of the sustainable development agenda, the complementarity of mandates, mutual recognition of expertise and a system-wide effort to lower transaction costs to partners and stakeholders.

44. The key to delivering as one across mandates and areas of expertise, therefore, is to reiterate the centrality of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to the system as a whole at the global, regional and national levels, and to provide a central, common, theme and organizing principle across governing bodies and secretariats. Each part of the United Nations system needs to remain close to its mandate(s) while looking to work horizontally across the system to enhance and strengthen the results and impact.

45. Data and the interoperability of United Nations information and knowledge systems could enable much-needed integrated analytics to identify the root causes or drivers of unsustainability and, hence, set the stage for multisectoral, multi-stakeholder, partnerships and strategies to implement the 2030 Agenda. The United Nations system could collaborate by, among other things, leveraging issues-based mechanisms that provide for concerted action around particular drivers or root causes and matching substantive focus with an integrated delivery modality through joint programming, with clearly defined responsibilities and accountability in regard to outcomes ensuring that individual and collective results and impact can be measured.

46. Efforts should be made to lower transaction costs through innovation and evolving the UNEP business model and its administrative tools to enable collaboration with United Nations system entities and mutual recognition of key business practices, including joint budgeting and reporting on programmatic results. UNEP regional offices are central to programmatic delivery as “One United Nations” at the country level and to coordination with other funds, programmes and agencies at the country and regional levels. The eventual full implementation of the United Nations development system’s standard operating procedures will require the incorporation of UNEP activities at the country level into the United Nations country team’s joint annual work plans.

47. Collaboration and coordinated action require a set of administrative procedures and legal instruments, which is also being developed through system-wide mechanisms such as the High-level Committee on Management and United Nations Development Group – to enable UNEP regional offices and technical divisions to transact with United Nations country teams in joint planning, implementation and reporting, as well as in receiving funds from Governments and bilateral funding partners in the regions. UNEP programming will need to be flexible and responsive in order to meet the emerging and urgent needs of developmental situations, including within the framework of the United Nations system’s humanitarian and emergency response offer.

48. UNEP will continue to foster a culture of United Nations system collaboration and nurture a “UNEP as part of the United Nations system” mindset that enables staff to understand how its work “docks with” and fits into that of the United Nations system as a whole. This will involve systematically developing both incentives and performance indicators for working together across and beyond the United Nations system. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires a deeper understanding of the respective mandates of the organizations of the United Nations system and, hence, more effective collaboration based on mutual recognition of their respective expertise and business models. Staff should be encouraged to develop multi-stakeholder partnerships, and work across sectors, participating in cross-organizational professional networks, to provide integrated, cross-disciplinary responses to sustainable development challenges.
