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**High-level segment**

**Delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda  
for Sustainable Development**

**Information note of the Executive Director**

*Summary*

On 25 September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 70/1, transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership, which all countries and stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, will implement.

The four core principles that underpin the approach of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda are universality, integration, human rights and innovation.

More than half of the Sustainable Development Goals have an environmental focus or address the sustainability of natural resources: poverty, health, food and agriculture, water and sanitation, human settlements, energy, climate change, sustainable consumption and production, oceans and terrestrial ecosystems. Over 86 targets are concerned with environmental sustainability, including at least one in each of the 17 Goals. Integration across all Goals means that progress on one cannot be achieved without progress on the other Goals.

The United Nations Environment Assembly has a crucial role to play in delivering the environmental dimension of the Goals, through its inputs to the high-level political forum on sustainable development, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, in the form of outcomes, messages and reviews. The cycle of regular assessments and reports of UNEP should be reviewed in the light of decisions on the Goal follow-up and review process to support deliberations in formulating the outcomes and messages of the Environment Assembly.

UNEP can play a pivotal role in providing assessments, policy analysis, and integrated analytics and approaches to support the follow-up and review process. The expected accomplishments of the programme of work and medium-term strategy over the next three cycles are aligned with the expected outcomes of the Goals for 2030.

\* UNEP/EA.2/1.

UNEP can support Member States, stakeholders and United Nations system entities in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through its technical expertise, knowledge systems and global partnerships and initiatives, including through joint programming at the country level.

UNEP aligns its strategic planning with the 2030 Agenda and strengthens collaboration with the rest of the United Nations system through, inter alia, the United Nations system-wide framework of strategies on the environment to ensure coherence, knowledge-sharing and capacity development and, in doing so, embedding global normative frameworks and addressing emerging environmental issues.

## **I. Introduction**

### **A. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

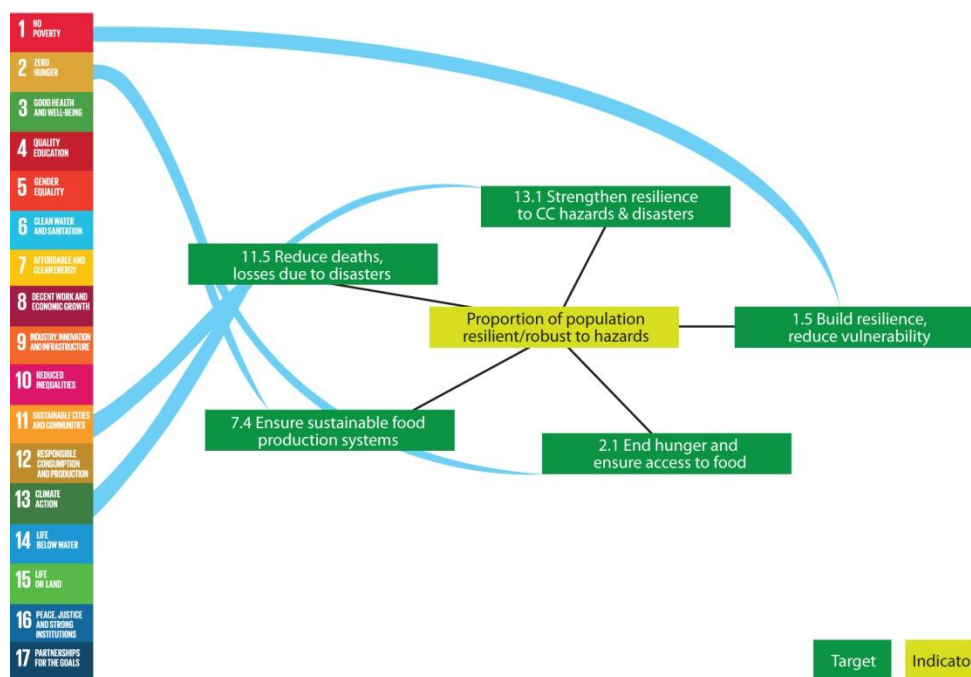
1. On 25 September 2015, the General Assembly adopted resolution 70/1, transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership, which all countries and stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, will implement.
2. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals is effective as of 1 January 2016 and will guide decisions over the next 15 years. The Goals, which are integrated, indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development, build on the Millennium Development Goals.
3. Through the 2030 Agenda, Member States aim to end poverty and hunger; to combat inequalities; to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and to ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources. Member States resolved also to create conditions for sustainable, inclusive and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all.
4. The 2030 Agenda is guided by the shared principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Millennium Declaration and the 2005 World Summit Outcome, and the commitments made at major United Nations conferences and summits which have laid a solid foundation for sustainable development.
5. Sustainable development is a universal aspiration, requiring international cooperation and joint responsibility for a greater common good. Successive global declarations and policy documents issued since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992, have emphasized that sustainable development is a universal agenda. In paragraph 247 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development “The future we want,” Heads of State and Government and high-level representatives called for the Goals to be global in nature and universally applicable to all countries while taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development.
6. Our societies face enormous challenges: resource scarcity, climate change, unemployment, food insecurity and inequity, among many others. Such challenges call for radical changes that the entire United Nations system and its partners must help to deliver. The role of the United Nations in this transformation is to assist countries in implementing the economic, social and environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda in a balanced and integrated manner.

### **B. Environmental Dimension of the 2030 Agenda**

7. The 2030 Agenda represents a paradigm shift to replace today’s growth-based economic model with a new model that aims to achieve sustainable and equitable economies and societies worldwide and ensure greater public participation in decision-making, in line with Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. It is an agenda that aims to address the root causes of unsustainable consumption and production patterns and transform them into sustainable lifestyles and livelihoods that benefit all. A well-cared-for environment is crucial for sustainability and the survival of humankind.
8. Ending poverty (Goal 1) can be achieved by integrating economic development, social protection and environmental health. Environmental poverty, derived from a lack of access to natural assets, inadequate management of resources and exposure to ecosystem degradation and pollution leads to greater vulnerability and a loss of resilience in communities. An increasing world population will make it even more challenging to provide basic services to the poor.

9. Human rights and the environment are inextricably linked through the right of every citizen to a clean, healthy and productive environment. Sustainable development, which is linked to access to natural resources in the 2030 Agenda, concerns the ability to meet the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to fulfil their aspirations to live in dignity.

10. More than half of the Goals and targets have an environmental focus or address the sustainability of natural resources, but achieving the transformative changes envisaged by the 2030 Agenda will require an integrated approach across all 17 Goals. For example, building resilience and reducing vulnerability in human populations (Goal 1) requires access to food (Goal 2) and sustainable food production systems (Goal 7), a reduction in losses owing to disasters (Goal 11) and a strengthened resilience to climate change (Goal 13) (see figure 1). The emphasis on the interlinkages between the three dimensions is present in all 17 Goals, making the 2030 Agenda truly integrated.



**Figure 1:** Example of the interlinkages between the Sustainable Development Goals, targets and indicators shown on UNEP Live ([www.unep.org/uneplive](http://www.unep.org/uneplive)).

11. The International Resource Panel of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) estimates that consumption of natural resources will triple by 2050. Sustainable development pathways will need to maintain, enhance and, where necessary, rebuild natural capital as a critical economic asset and as a source of public benefits.

12. New indicators, such as the Inclusive Wealth Index,<sup>1</sup> that look beyond traditional economics of resource use and development (e.g., gross domestic product and the Human Development Index) will also be needed. Such indicators take account of manufactured, human and natural capital and provide a more realistic assessment of a nation's wealth and the sustainability of its growth.

## II. Supporting implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

### A. Strategic approach of the United Nations Environment Programme

13. The 2030 vision statement of UNEP captures the challenge set out in the 2030 Agenda to develop and enhance integrated approaches to sustainable development:

*Vision 2030:* UNEP aims to reduce environmental risks and increase the resilience of societies and the environment as a whole, while also responding to the challenges highlighted in the situation analysis set out in the medium-term strategy for the period 2018–2021. This will not

<sup>1</sup> The Inclusive Wealth Index is a joint initiative of the United Nations University International Human Dimensions Programme and UNEP in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

only foster the environmental dimension of sustainable development, but also bring socioeconomic benefits. The 2018–2021 period will provide a stepping stone for UNEP to realize the 2030 vision.

14. Four core principles underpin the UNEP approach to delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda:

(a) *Universality*: the 2030 Agenda is global, applying to all peoples in all countries. It is a shared agenda that requires a collective response from the international community, Governments, businesses and citizens' groups.

(b) *Integration*: the 2030 Agenda as a harmonious whole. Past approaches treated the social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainable development as disconnected pillars, but the new Agenda integrates and balances the three dimensions.

(c) *Human rights and equity*: the 2030 Agenda provides a pathway to a more just and sustainable world for all. It encourages a more even distribution of wealth and resources; equitable access to opportunities, information and rule of law; and the development of new approaches that build capacities at all levels of society.

(d) *Innovation*: the acceleration and transfer of technological innovations are key to delivering on the 2030 Agenda. The world will need new innovation pathways that draw on formal science, traditional knowledge and citizen common sense.

15. UNEP will deploy the following approaches for effective delivery:

(a) *Strengthening the science-policy interface for evidence-based decision-making*: UNEP will continue to identify science that integrates social, economic and environmental considerations for policymaking and decision-making. UNEP is also supporting Member States and stakeholders in data gathering, policy analysis and assessment processes through its global and regional Global Environment Outlook assessments and development of policy tools and guidelines. Through UNEP Live, there is a focus on indicators to track the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda, tracking synergies with the multilateral environmental agreements, deploying the UNEP indicator reporting and information system to support follow-up and review of the Goals and streamline reporting obligations, building national capacities to monitor the environment and derive relevant data and statistics, encouraging greater participation through citizen science and strengthening regional and global science-policy communities of practice.

(b) *Providing expert knowledge and technical assistance on the environment*: UNEP will provide technical guidance and support for environmental governance, developing coherent laws and policies and facilitating their effective implementation. This is to ensure that countries have frameworks for environmental laws and institutions in place and that environmental considerations underpin development policy.

(c) *Convening stakeholders to agree on global environmental norms and standards*: inclusivity is an important part of the 2030 Agenda. UNEP recognizes that access to information is a key condition for citizen participation, transparency and accountability. Significant efforts have been made to ensure that citizens, civil society, various levels of Government and the private sector are consulted on the new agenda. UNEP will continue creating and facilitating avenues for cooperation between the United Nations, Governments, bilateral and multilateral agencies, companies and civil society organizations to initiate joint commitments and actions. Central to the efforts of UNEP will be environmental advocacy based on strengthened science-policy linkages, aimed at creating or changing policies, laws, regulations, distribution of resources or other decisions that affect people's lives.

(d) *Building greater integration of normative frameworks into the work of UNEP*: to deliver on the 2030 Agenda, the United Nations system needs to be innovative, agile, inclusive and results-oriented. The United Nations system recognized the need for integrated system-wide policies and strategies in support of the Goals; policies that link normative frameworks with operational activities and encompass all United Nations activities. UNEP will increase integration of those normative frameworks, such as human rights, gender equality, and peace and security, into its work.

(e) *Promoting partnerships*: the ability of the United Nations system to redefine how it engages with partners and works with other stakeholders towards shared sustainable development outcomes is crucial for the 2030 Agenda. Effective sustainable development cooperation will require the formation of issue-based coalitions and platforms that integrate multiple stakeholders (Governments, civil society and the private sector) to improve decision-making, strategic planning, service delivery, knowledge-sharing, and collective monitoring and accountability at all levels.

(f) *Supporting the universal nature of the 2030 Agenda*: UNEP will contribute to the efforts of the United Nations for system-wide coherence on sustainable development from an environmental perspective and with a focus on creating coherence in the way the United Nations system integrates the environmental dimension to implement normative guidance and environmental safeguards, and “Delivering as one” at the country level.

(g) *Supporting implementation and building capacity in the regions*: a strengthened strategic regional presence will enable UNEP to work towards global consensus and policy coherence on key issues relating to the environmental dimension of sustainable development, while creatively pursuing specific opportunities and approaches that are available regionally. The approach will enable UNEP to foster effective partnerships, including through South-South and triangular cooperation and with the wider United Nations system through “Delivering as one”.

(h) *Tackling new and emerging issues*: UNEP will continue, through the publication of its Frontiers Reports and collaborative research network alliances, such as Future Earth, to identify the most important new and emerging issues for the global environment, including those related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

(i) *Supporting a global shift towards clean and environmentally sound technologies*: technology cuts across all subprogrammes of UNEP. Moving forward, UNEP will expand its technology agenda towards pressing challenges, such as water and food security, health, energy security and climate change (within the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) by prioritizing external and internal coordination and through widespread capacity-building and strengthened efforts to make the technology facilitation mechanisms operational and responsive to a long-term, systemic environmental perspective, as decided in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the 2030 Agenda.

(j) *Widening participation in environmental education and training*: an expanded range of training courses through massive open online courses will be offered by UNEP in partnership with universities and institutions (Global Universities Partnership on Environmental Sustainability, Global Resource Information Database centres and other collaborating centres) to ensure greater access to knowledge for sustainable development.

16. The major challenge in delivering the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda is the overall level of complexity and ambition. To address such a significant number of interrelated aspects will require a highly integrated approach to environmental policymaking, ensuring that connections are made with other development concerns, such as human rights, gender equality, economic growth and employment.

17. Since many environmental outcomes take many years to emerge, UNEP is adopting a more results-focused, longer-term outcome planning approach, aligned to the target date for the 2030 Agenda. Using outcome maps, the medium-term strategy outlines the logical chain of results to move from the current situation to 2030. The outcome maps set the overall objectives for 2030 with a logical progression of outcomes to achieve these goals and the outcomes to be achieved in the 2018–2021 period.

18. The seven subprogrammes of UNEP provide building blocks, each of which has an outcome map towards a 2030 objective in response to relevant Goals and targets (see figure 2). Indicators at impact level are being aligned with relevant indicators from the global indicator framework for the Goals, which will allow for the monitoring of progress made towards implementation of the environmental dimension, as well as reporting to the Environment Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

## **B. Partnerships, initiatives and networks**

19. In implementing its medium-term strategy for 2018–2021 and associated programmes of work, UNEP will be making significant investments in knowledge, expertise and networks to support Member States, civil society organizations and the United Nations system in providing leverage for action that will enable Member States, civil society organizations and United Nations system entities to undergo the transformative changes envisaged by the 2030 Agenda, convene stakeholders to focus action on catalytic interventions and identify and communicate key messages for decision makers.

20. Implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires a significant increase in the engagement and participation of stakeholders and civil society in delivering the Goals and targets. It thus provides an opportunity for UNEP to expand, enhance and forge new collaborations with a range of key multi-stakeholder partnerships that are relevant to the Goals, as listed below:



**Figure 2:** Mapping of the seven subprogrammes of UNEP across the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

**Climate change**

- (a) *Inclusive Green Economy*, which includes partners such as the Partnership for Action on Green Economy, has an integrated approach that can help countries to maximize benefits to human well-being derived from a healthy environment;
- (b) *Climate and Clean Air Coalition*, a 100-member partnership to reduce short-lived climate pollutants, supports 16 key measures that can reduce global warming by 0.6°C by 2050 if they are implemented by 2030;
- (c) *Climate Technology Centre and Network*, the operational arm of the technology mechanism of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, promotes the accelerated development and transfer of climate technologies for adaptation and mitigation;
- (d) The *United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD)* is an initiative of the Food

and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme and UNEP that aims to correct market failures by including ecosystem goods and services. The expanded REDD+ includes the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of carbon stocks;

#### **Resilience to disasters and conflicts**

(e) The *Joint Environment Unit of UNEP and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)* is housed within the Emergency Services Branch of OCHA and assists Member States in preparing for and responding to environmental emergencies in an integrated manner;

#### **Healthy and productive ecosystems**

(f) The *Global Plans of Action*, coordinated by UNEP, are aimed at enhancing international cooperation and finding solutions for marine litter, nutrient management and waste water and for their impacts on economies, ecosystems and human health;

(g) The *Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*, hosted by UNEP, produces fast-track assessments on issues such as pollination and food production, land degradation and invasive species;

#### **Environmental governance**

(h) The *Poverty-Environment Initiative of the United Nations Development Programme and UNEP* provides tailor-made and practical tools and methodologies for developing countries to catalyse major changes to government policy and budgetary priorities that sustain natural resources and end poverty;

(i) *International Advisory Council for the Advancement of Justice, Governance and Law for Enforcement Sustainability*: the nine-member advisory council includes Chief Justices, senior judges, auditors and legal academics. Led by UNEP, it provides strategic guidance to the international community in improving the legal foundations for achieving international environmental goals and overcoming legal barriers to inclusive sustainable development;

#### **Chemicals and waste**

(j) The *Global Mercury Partnership/Interim Secretariat for the Minamata Convention on Mercury*, currently administered by UNEP, is a global treaty to protect human health and the environment from the toxic effects of mercury;

(k) The *Special Programme for Chemicals Waste* supports country-driven institutional strengthening at the national level in the context of an integrated approach to addressing the financing of sound management of chemicals and waste;

(l) The *Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management* has the overall objective to achieve the sound management of chemicals and waste throughout their life cycle so that by 2020 chemicals are produced and used in ways that minimize significant adverse impacts on human health and the environment;

#### **Resource efficiency and sustainable consumption and production**

(m) The *International Resource Panel* was established in 2007 to provide decision makers and other stakeholders with scientific assessments on the sustainable use of resources and their environmental impacts over their full life cycles;

(n) *10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns* is a global framework of action to enhance international cooperation to accelerate the shift towards sustainable development;

(o) The *UNEP Finance Initiative* works on innovative financing with the private and financial sectors, contributing to the discourse on financing for climate and wider sustainability issues;

(p) *UNEP Inquiry* is looking into the design of a sustainable financial system, including policy options in support of financing a green economy;

(q) The *Energy Efficiency Hub of the Sustainable Energy for All Initiative* is implemented through the Copenhagen Centre on Energy Efficiency as part of the UNEP-Technical University of Denmark Partnership. UNEP is also supporting countries in leapfrogging to energy efficiency with the enlighten initiative and a new partnership on appliances;

#### **Environment under review**

(r) *Global Environment Outlook* is the UNEP flagship participatory and global assessment that builds capacity for conducting integrated environmental assessments and reporting on the state, trends and outlooks of the environment. It is also a series of products that facilitate the

science-policy interface and it is underpinned by UNEP Live, the UNEP global knowledge-sharing platform;

(s) The *Global Programme of Research on Climate Change Vulnerability, Impacts and Adaptation* is a global initiative that aims to provide direction and coherence at the international level for research on vulnerability, impacts and adaptation;

(t) The *Eye on Earth Alliance* addresses the importance of environmental and societal information and networking to decision-making. It offers a forum to convene thought and action leaders to collaborate towards strengthening existing initiatives and filling future gaps.

21. Non-state actors also play a key role in supporting the advocacy of UNEP, e.g., through environmental non-governmental organizations and their inputs to the United Nations Environment Assembly and international treaties. Through MyUNEA.org, a moderated interactive online hub hosted by UNEP, stakeholders are encouraged to participate in the preparations for the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly. In the run-up to the second session, the platform will provide an opportunity for the public to contribute ideas to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and in preparation for the global thematic report entitled “Healthy Environment-Healthy People”, which will be launched at the second session. This will help to provide Governments and policymakers with input from a wide spectrum of stakeholders on issues, options and solutions.

22. Participation of major groups and stakeholders at the United Nations Environment Assembly provides a unique opportunity for Member States to strengthen the environmental advocacy role of UNEP. By entering into a dialogue and building relationships with major groups and stakeholders and civil society on key issues, partnerships and coalitions for the environment are more likely to succeed. The engagement and participation of major groups and stakeholders in the United Nations Environment Assembly will facilitate multi-stakeholder approaches and provide an important opportunity for successful policy dialogues that the United Nations Environment Assembly may wish to pursue.

### **III. Key arrangements in the United Nations system**

#### **A. The role of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination and its High-level Committee on Programmes, High-level Committee on Management and United Nations Development Group**

23. UNEP works through high-level United Nations inter-agency coordination mechanisms to promote the integration of environment perspectives in system-wide efforts to support Member States in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The mechanisms provide effective platforms to promote coherence in policies and strategies that are directly related to the environment at global, regional and country levels, as well as United Nations system policies reflecting an environmental perspective.

24. The Environment Management Group is a United Nations system-wide coordination body on environment and human settlements that identifies issues on the international environmental agenda that warrant cooperation and finds ways to engage its collective capacity in coherent management responses.

25. UNEP will intensify its efforts to integrate the environmental dimension across the agenda of the United Nations system as a common response to the 2030 Agenda, working collaboratively through the Environment Management Group and other mechanisms, strategies and innovative partnerships to deliver better results and impacts, create synergies, strengthen collective action and maximize the potential for environmentally sound development. UNEP will invite members of the Environment Management Group to contribute to the implementation of a framework of strategies on the environment upon its completion and, within their mandate, resources and capacities, to respond collectively to the environmental aspirations of the 2030 Agenda.

26. The Chief Executives Board for Coordination has agreed that the ability of the United Nations system to work across substantive areas and aim to achieve synergies across the Goals and the United Nations pillars is essential to delivering the 2030 Agenda. The complexity of the 2030 Agenda requires collective action both within the United Nations family and in broader partnerships. Advocacy at all levels, including directed to individual United Nations system governing bodies, will be important in mobilizing all sectors and all actors.

27. The Secretary-General tasked the high-level committees (High-level Committee on Programmes, High-level Committee on Management and the United Nations Development Group) of the Chief Executives Board to collaborate in 2016 to produce one set of principles, across policy,



operational and administrative aspects of the work of the United Nations and to guide the support of the United Nations system to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Goals in an integrated manner.

28. The High-level Committee on Programmes has already explored collective and flexible approaches to delivering on the 2030 Agenda through multi-stakeholder partnerships, dissemination of evidence-based policies and scaling-up of effective and innovative interventions. One example is the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth.

29. Another process of the High-level Committee on Programmes is to develop a common United Nations approach to addressing inequalities and discrimination as an integral part of a human rights-based approach, in line with the imperatives of “leaving no one behind” and “reaching those furthest behind first”.

30. The United Nations discussion paper developed under the High-level Committee on Programmes entitled “Promoting Peaceful, Just, and Inclusive Societies, Preventing Conflict” reiterated that preventing conflict is a shared objective and the responsibility of the entire United Nations system, as a cross-cutting thread across all 17 Goals. The paper explained how United Nations support towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda will require that the United Nations peace and security, human rights and development actors work together closely and coherently. The Chief Executives Board also agreed on the need for urgent action in leading the United Nations system towards greater United Nations system-wide integration of these pillars, to enhance collaboration pragmatically through existing mechanisms and without creating additional processes, layers or functions.

31. The High-level Committee on Management of the Chief Executives Board is responsible for coherent, efficient and cost-effective management across the United Nations system of organizations. The High-level Committee on Management is developing approaches to strategically reposition the United Nations system on the management and operational sides to support the 2030 Agenda. The High-level Committee on Management has emphasized that the United Nations system requires appropriate business models, responding to the need to attract and retain a multisectoral workforce and developing innovative and sustainable business solutions to deliver high-quality, efficient and cost-effective operational services.

32. The United Nations Development Group, which coordinates United Nations operational activities at the country level to achieve the internationally agreed Goals, is now supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In response to the request by Member States for coherent and integrated support from the United Nations development system to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the United Nations Development Group has committed to a series of strategic actions that will guide its work. Those actions include integrating development, humanitarian, human rights and peacebuilding agendas; providing good practice and knowledge resources on mainstreaming and accelerating effective and coherent support and encouraging evidence-based joint programming (see paragraph 33); accelerating higher performance and common business practices, including through the mutual recognition of best business practices and the system-wide adoption of best practices; implementing joint programmes and joint financing and investment strategies; designing and utilizing global and country-based, multi-window pooled funding platforms for the 2030 Agenda; being accountable, at all levels, for inter-agency approaches and agreements; and enabling agency programming and operations at the country level, as per agreement of the United Nations Development Group and the Chief Executives Board.

33. New guidance for the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and common country programming processes that supports national efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda is being developed with a view to translating United Nations Development Group commitments into effective country-level interventions by the United Nations country teams. The overarching drive behind the guidance is the need to adopt integrated approaches to programming that respond to the imperatives of the new Agenda and effectively address the complex and interconnected nature of the Goals, based on the following characteristics:

(a) *Relevance*: the Development Assistance Framework must support national sustainable development priorities and contribute to the implementation of internationally, regionally and nationally agreed normative frameworks for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights.

(b) *Strategic focus*: the Development Assistance Framework needs to be strategic, recognizing that the United Nations cannot do everything, and focus efforts and resources on interventions that leverage the unique comparative advantage of the United Nations system,

accelerating progress and ensuring sustainability, and focus actions and resources on interventions that will have a catalytic effect across a broad range of areas.

(c) *Substantive engagement*: the Development Assistance Framework need to build on substantive engagement with national partners, including Governments and other segments of society, to identify priorities and mobilize an integrated, in-depth and comprehensive country analysis, while providing national partners and stakeholders with a perspective relative to the ambition of the 2030 Agenda.

(d) *United Nations coherence and effectiveness*: the Development Assistance Framework must be coherent, drawing on the complementarity and coordination of United Nations country-level operations, giving due consideration to joint programming approaches and exploring opportunities for harmonized business practices.

(e) *Technical soundness*: the Development Assistance Framework programming has to be evidence-based and apply results-focused management approaches, with an underlying theory of change and the use of specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound indicators. It also needs to provide for transparency and accountability of results and lead to cost-effective interventions that ensure value for money.

(f) *Enabling support*: United Nations country teams must use the Development Assistance Framework as an enabling framework for the country-level work of United Nations country teams, including as a platform for partnership development and innovation. United Nations country teams should ensure that the Development Assistance Framework outcomes are commensurate with available resources.

34. Underlying this set of core features is the imperative to “leave no one behind”. This pledge provides the overarching principle for the generation of new development assistance frameworks and embodies the commitment of the United Nations development system to supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, finding further application through three programming principles: human rights, with a focus on addressing inequalities related to leaving no one behind; ensuring environmental health and stewardship and building resilience; and accountability, to better capture the main tenets of the 2030 Agenda, while ensuring that the core norms and mandates of the United Nations continue to drive its country-level work, including data and capacity development.

35. The UNEP regional offices are central to programmatic delivery as one United Nations system at the country level and coordination with other funds, programmes and agencies in the regions and at the national level. Full implementation of the Standard Operating Procedures of the United Nations development system will enable UNEP activities at the country level to be incorporated as part of the joint annual work plans of the United Nations country team.

36. As UNEP continues to advance the integration of the environment across the 2030 Agenda, it will be able to leverage the norms, standards and datasets of other United Nations system entities, in particular with regard to human rights, inequality and discrimination, to effectively address the linkages and nexus issues that are central to sustainable development and environmental stewardship.

37. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda call for establishing a technology facilitation mechanism based on collaboration between Member States, civil society, the private sector, the scientific community, United Nations entities and other stakeholders. The mechanism was approved in September 2015 and consists of a United Nations inter-agency task team on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals; a collaborative annual multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation; and an online platform as a gateway for information on science, technology and innovation initiatives, mechanisms and programmes. UNEP has been active in the development of the technology facilitation mechanism, co-chairing (with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs) the United Nations inter-agency working group that became the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Team.

## **B. The Role of Regional Economic Commissions**

38. The regional dimension provides a vital bridge between global frameworks and national development agendas in relation to the integration, implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. Regional efforts could inform both global and national policymaking and normative agenda-setting through the collation of regional experiences and perspectives; promote partnerships and policy coherence, including at the subregional level and in support of countries in special situations, such as least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and countries in conflict; and build and increase resilience to crises through greater capacity to

innovate, share common interests, pool resources, coordinate and build on synergies and complementarities.

39. The regional economic commissions are collectively articulating new strategies and action plans to prioritize support to Member States in cooperation with the United Nations system. The following key areas provide the shared emphasis and harmonized approach of the five regional economic commissions:

- (a) Integrating the Goals into national development planning and fiscal frameworks;
- (b) Promoting policy coherence, consistency and coordination at the regional, subregional and national levels and supporting regional forums for sustainable development;
- (c) Enhancing data and statistical capacities of Member States for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;
- (d) Identifying and promoting alternative and innovative sources of financing for development;
- (e) Leveraging science, technology and innovation;
- (f) Tapping South-South and regional partnerships;
- (g) Translating regional models into global public goods.

40. By engaging in the regional interagency mechanisms, UNEP can play a key role in bridging the gap between the environmental dimension of global frameworks and regional development agendas and horizontally across regional forums in the context of the integration, implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. Engagement in regional forums, including United Nations coordination mechanisms, can also be used to promote and scale up implementation of the UNEP programme of work activities. Specific objectives of this engagement will be as follows:

- (a) Tailor the 2030 Agenda around common regional environmental priorities, promote a common understanding of regional environmental priorities and ensure that they are brought to the attention of regional and subregional intergovernmental forums and other regionally relevant mechanisms.
- (b) Mobilize partners and harmonize resources around common regional environmental priorities to promote regional environmental policy coherence for Goal implementation and reduce transaction costs for Member States engaging in United Nations system meetings and processes on environment, including addressing institutional capacity related to knowledge-sharing, implementation and reporting.
- (c) Track progress and identify environmental achievements, challenges and critical factors in implementing the environment dimension of the 2030 Agenda to promote a common understanding of regional environmental priorities by drawing on data in the context of the 2030 Agenda, and to reduce overlap and costs of multiple and disconnected knowledge products on the environment prepared by individual stakeholders, while advancing the use of UNEP assessments and data, including in regional Goal reports.

41. UNEP is undertaking the mapping, review, consolidation and coordination of existing data sources and reporting mechanisms through UNEP Live and the Indicator Reporting Information System to support regional and subregional intergovernmental forums, including the regional environmental information networks established under the Global Environment Outlook process, and to ensure coherence in data collection and synthesis for Goal follow-up and review.

#### **IV. Potential contribution of the United Nations Environment Assembly to the strengthened institutional framework for sustainable development**

42. At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, world leaders recognized the importance of a strengthened institutional framework for sustainable development, which would focus on integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced manner and enhancing its implementation. Coherence, coordination, inclusiveness, transparency and effectiveness were identified as some of the conditions for this framework to find common solutions related to global challenges to sustainable development, leading to, inter alia, the establishment of the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the strengthening and upgrading of UNEP, including through the establishment of the Environment Assembly.

43. Each of those aspects was envisioned from an inclusive perspective, which considered other essential pieces of the institutional framework for the sustainable development institutional landscape, such as the authority of the General Assembly on global matters of concern to the international community and its central position as its chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations; the coordination role of the Economic and Social Council in the coherent implementation of intergovernmental outcomes by the United Nations system; the role of international financial institutions; and the operational work of the United Nations development system. It is therefore important to identify the distinctive background of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the United Nations Environment Assembly in the context of the reforms within the institutional framework for sustainable development of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in order to appreciate the scope of their synergies.

#### **A. Linkages between the United Nations Environment Assembly and the General Assembly**

44. Taking into account the relationship of subsidiarity, linkages between the United Nations Environment Assembly and the General Assembly are mainly framed within the authority of the General Assembly on United Nations programmatic and budgetary matters, through decisions by its Fifth Committee and the work of related organs, as well as within the consideration of the report of the governing body of UNEP by the Second Committee of the General Assembly, in accordance with resolution 2997 (XXVII).

##### **Consideration of United Nations Environment Assembly reports by the General Assembly**

45. By its resolution 68/215 on the report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on its first universal session and implementation of section IV.C, entitled "Environmental pillar in the context of sustainable development", of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the General Assembly decided to include in the provisional agenda of its sixty-ninth session, under the item entitled "Sustainable development", a sub-item entitled "Report of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme". Furthermore, by its resolution 69/223, the General Assembly decided to include the same sub-item in the provisional agenda of its upcoming seventy-first session. While the report by the United Nations Environment Assembly is not therefore circumscribed to the proceedings of its sessions, it could include recommendations to the Assembly on specific environmental matters that may need further legislative action owing to potential requirements from the United Nations system and the institutional framework for sustainable development as a whole.

#### **B. Linkages between the United Nations Environment Assembly and the Economic and Social Council**

46. Existing and potential linkages between the Environment Assembly and the Economic and Social Council respond to various legislative sources and to procedural and substantive purposes such as the need to fulfil reporting obligations and to support not only the realization of the respective mandates of the Economic and Social Council and the Environment Assembly, but also the correlated mandates for the effective integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development and the implementation of outcomes of United Nations conferences and summits, in particular Agenda 21, the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

##### **Formal reporting**

47. By its resolution 2997 (XXVII), by which UNEP was established, the General Assembly decided that the Governing Council would report annually to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council. By virtue of that mandate, which has not been superseded by subsequent legislation, including Assembly resolutions 66/288, 67/213 and 67/251, the Economic and Social Council also has the legal prerogative to "transmit to the Assembly such comments on the report as it may deem necessary, particularly with regard to questions of co-ordination and to the relationship of environmental policies and programmes within the United Nations system to overall economic and social policies and priorities".

#### **C. Linkages between the United Nations Environment Assembly and the high-level political forum on sustainable development**

48. Both the establishment of the high-level political forum on sustainable development and universal membership in the Environment Assembly are provided for in section IV of the "The future

we want” as building blocks of the institutional framework for sustainable development. This common origin also indicates that the distinctive mandates and roles of the high-level political forum and the Environment Assembly share common purposes related to the objectives of the institutional umbrella they represent, namely the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development and its enhanced implementation, supported by strengthened coherence, coordination, effectiveness, inclusiveness and transparency, among other factors.

49. Furthermore, General Assembly resolution 67/290, on the format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, outlined some aspects that reaffirm the relevance of mutual support and collaboration between the high-level political forum and other intergovernmental bodies, such as the United Nations Environment Assembly, and allow for their contributions to the work of the high-level political forum. Some examples are as follows:

(a) In paragraph 17, the General Assembly invited the organizations of the United Nations system to contribute within their respective mandates to the discussions of the forum.

(b) In paragraph 19, the General Assembly invited the forum to take into account the contributions and work of relevant United Nations intergovernmental bodies in the social, economic and environmental fields.

(c) In paragraph 20, the General Assembly decided, among other measures, that the forum would strengthen the science-policy interface by examining documentation, bringing together dispersed information and assessments, including in the form of a global sustainable development report. In relation to that area, in accordance with “The future we want”, Assembly resolution 67/213 and decision 27/2 of its first universal Governing Council, UNEP has a mandate to promote a strong science-policy interface, building on existing international instruments, assessments, panels and information networks, including the Global Environment Outlook, as one of the processes aimed at bringing together information and assessment to support informed decision-making. In that regard, options for concrete collaboration and coordination between the high-level political forum and the Environment Assembly on the science-policy interface could be considered and recommended by the Environment Assembly to the General Assembly.

(d) By its resolution 68/215, the General Assembly welcomed inputs by UNEP, as the leading global environmental authority, on the environmental dimension of sustainable development, including in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda, as well as in discussions on the scope and modalities of a global sustainable development report. The report is produced under the high-level political forum.

50. The section on follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda provides the legislative umbrella and guidance for the Environment Assembly to contribute to the implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development and to its integration with the social and economic dimensions. The four action clusters are strengthening the role of the high-level political forum in the review and follow-up system; conducting regular, state-led reviews on the implementation of the Goals; mobilizing global engagement in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda; and enabling ownership and participation of major groups and other stakeholders. The high-level political forum is responsible for addressing new and emerging issues, and the Environment Assembly should contribute by drawing these issues to the attention of the Economic and Social Council President before the high-level political forum.

51. The Environment Assembly, along with various intergovernmental United Nations bodies, is also expected to support the thematic reviews of the high-level political forum on progress in achieving the Goals. The Environment Assembly will be invited to decide on whether to contribute and if so in what format. This does not imply a new formal reporting link between the high-level political forum and the Environment Assembly.

52. In paragraph 48 of the report of the Secretary-General on critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level, it is recommended that intergovernmental forums, such as the Environment Assembly and the World Health Assembly, reflect on the implications of the 2030 Agenda for their respective areas of work, bearing in mind the integrated nature of the Agenda; examine their agendas and methods of work to ensure that they are able to respond to requests for voluntary inputs; and reflect on their ability to engage with stakeholders.

## **D. Linkages between the United Nations Environment Assembly and the regional intergovernmental forums**

53. The 2030 Agenda recognizes follow-up and review at regional and subregional levels as valuable opportunities for peer learning, including voluntary reviews, sharing of best practices and discussion on shared targets. It also encourages Member States to identify the most suitable regional forum in which to engage, building on existing mechanisms at the regional level and allowing adequate policy space.

54. The United Nations regional commissions have been called upon to support the review of regional progress on the 2030 Agenda, focusing in the first instance on existing regional forums. These include the following:

(a) The Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, approved by the Joint African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development in 2015, will undertake thematic reviews with the inputs provided by the Economic Commission for Africa statutory committees, the joint meetings of the ECA Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration. The environmental dimension is currently covered by the African Union specialized technical bodies, including, inter alia, the African Ministerial Council on Water, the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, the African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development and the African Ministerial Council on Science and Technology;

(b) The Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, inaugurated in 2014, is an inclusive regional platform, the outcomes of which feed into the high-level political forum and the annual commission sessions of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). At its second meeting in 2015, the Asia-Pacific Forum agreed to initiate a regional road map for implementing the post-2015 development agenda at its 2016 session. The subsidiary bodies of ESCAP, such as the sectoral committees (e.g., Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment), would provide inputs for specific Goals, with the environmental dimension being covered by the Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific;

(c) The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) "Environment for Europe" process. Based on the outcome of sustainable development discussions at the 66th session of the Commission in April 2015, the ECE Secretariat initiated a consultative process with Member States, the regional United Nations system, other international and regional organizations and civil society to determine the most effective modalities for regional follow-up and review of the Goals. This would integrate other regional and subregional bodies (e.g., European Union, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Eurasian Economic Union, regional offices of United Nations entities, United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia and regional development banks), existing review mechanisms, comprising mechanisms that are carried out within ECE, including its sectoral committees, governing bodies of legal instruments and policy reviews (environmental performance reviews, innovation performance reviews, studies on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade, country profiles on housing and land management), and mechanisms by other actors within and outside the United Nations;

(d) The Arab High-level Forum on Sustainable Development was inaugurated in 2014 and convened annually by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). The Forum is coordinated with the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment and the League of Arab States. Inputs from the ten intergovernmental subsidiary bodies and other technical committees of ESCWA feed into the Forum, including inputs on sectoral or thematic reviews with a focus on regional priorities and emerging issues with an integrated/nexus approach. The Arab Sustainable Development Report will be the regional flagship for the Agenda 2030 achievements and trends;

(e) The Regional Implementation Forum on Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, its modalities, scope and composition are to be considered through a broad regional consultation that will be organized in the first quarter of 2016 and open to Member States, United Nations regional agencies, academia and civil society representatives. A final proposal will be submitted for consideration and approval during the Biennial Session of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, to be held in Mexico in May 2016. The Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean will be a key body in this process.

55. UNEP could increase its engagement and work closely with the regional commission sustainable development forum secretariats in the lead-up to and during the second and subsequent sessions of the United Nations Environment Assembly to more effectively and practically collaborate on the agenda and outcome documents; ensure high-level policy and institutional coherence on sustainable development and a common understanding of and approach to regional priorities, challenges, implementation and reporting relating to the Goals; identify options to coordinate and input into these mechanisms, including convening major UNEP-led environment-related mechanisms; and collaborate to increase the participation and profile of ministries of environment and natural resources in those regional forums.
56. UNEP could bridge the gap between major groups and stakeholders on environment and regional intergovernmental platforms and interagency mechanisms on the 2030 Agenda by organizing major groups and stakeholders meetings back-to-back with key regional forums and supporting the participation of major groups and stakeholders.
57. UNEP could routinely review and synthesize environmental outcomes and priorities of subregional and regional intergovernmental outcome documents to inform the agenda and discussions of regional ministers of environment meetings and share with partners to forge a common understanding and voice on subregional and regional environmental priorities.
58. In order to strengthen linkages between annual regional commission sessions and environment committees and the Environment Assembly, UNEP could provide briefings on Environment Assembly priorities at the relevant regional commission environment committees (e.g., the Committee on Environment and Development of ESCAP and the Committee on Environmental Policy of ECE) and gather inputs to future Environment Assembly agendas.
59. UNEP could tailor and scale up the voluntary environmental performance reviews model used by the regional commissions in Europe and West Asia to focus on the monitoring, reporting and implementation of environmental Goals at the country level and facilitate comparisons and exchange of lessons learned at regional forums.

## V. Options for consideration

60. At the global level, the Environment Assembly has an important role in providing guidance on global norms and standards for keeping the environment under review, which requires the development and use of adequate tools, follow-up on the science-policy interface, prompt action on emerging issues and the consolidation of thematic follow-up and review processes. Sustainable development requires strengthened capacities and effective institutions, and the Environment Assembly can help to frame the role of UNEP in that regard, as well as its contribution for systemic change, in particular as a catalyst for policy and institutional coherence, effective partnerships and accountability.
61. The Environment Assembly will need to translate such guidance towards the environmental dimension by ensuring that effective linkages are made with follow-up and review arrangements, including United Nations conferences and processes that are related to the multilateral environmental agreements. While the high-level political forum on sustainable development should focus on integrating the multiple outcomes related to those processes, ensuring a multidimensional and global perspective, the Environment Assembly could guide its own processes on the integration of the environmental dimension in accordance with the preparations and outcomes of the high-level political forum, including the potential cross-cutting themes that are likely to inform its annual Goals review and follow-up.
62. The high-level political forum is mandated to strengthen the science-policy interface, including by considering the global sustainable development report produced by the United Nations system. The Environment Assembly could support the contribution by UNEP of relevant information and analyses with respect to the environmental dimension of sustainable development and consider the findings and recommendations of the report in its deliberations and strategic guidance, also in the context of the UNEP programme of work.
63. The Environment Assembly could also consider how to ensure coherence and integration of recommendations and resolutions, including with other newly created arrangements, such as the multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals and the bureaus of intergovernmental bodies, such as the multilateral environmental agreements. The Environment Assembly may wish to explore options for its inputs to be presented in different United Nations settings through its President. Strengthening the interlinkages and informal exchanges between bureaus of existing governing bodies of agencies, funds and programmes and the

Environment Assembly would give further opportunity to look for synergies and integration within the 2030 Agenda.

64. The Environment Assembly has a crucial role to play in delivering the environmental dimension of the Goals through its inputs to the Economic and Social Council in the form of outcomes and messages. The cycle of regular assessments and reports of UNEP should be reviewed in the light of decisions on the Goal follow-up and review process.

65. UNEP plays a pivotal role in providing assessments, policy analysis and integrated analytics and approaches to deliver on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda, including the follow-up and review process. The expected accomplishments of the programme of work and medium-term strategy over the next three cycles are aligned with the expected outcomes of the Goals in 2030.

66. UNEP can support the implementation by Member States, stakeholders and United Nations system entities of the 2030 Agenda through its technical expertise, knowledge systems and global partnerships and initiatives, including through joint programming at the country level.

67. UNEP aligns its strategic planning to the 2030 Agenda and strengthens collaboration with the rest of the United Nations system through, inter alia, the United Nations system-wide framework of strategies on the environment, to ensure coherence, knowledge-sharing and capacity development, and in doing so embedding global normative frameworks and addressing emerging environmental issues.

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