

Implementation of the Resolutions of the Second Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

Major themes covered by the Assembly

The second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, which took place in Nairobi on 23 – 27 May 2016, under the theme “Delivering on the Environmental Dimension of the 2030 Agenda,” adopted 25 resolutions that address twelve specific themes. These included: implementing the Paris Agreement, promoting sustainable consumption and production, food waste, safeguarding ecosystems, combating illegal trade in wildlife, advancing natural capital management, mainstreaming biodiversity, monitoring and preserving air quality, protecting the environment in areas of conflict, preventing marine litter, and promoting sound management of chemicals and waste (See Annex 1 for the full list of resolutions).

UN Environment operates under seven thematic priorities: climate change; disasters and conflicts; ecosystem management; environmental governance; chemicals and waste; resource efficiency; and environment under review. Plans were developed to implement the 25 resolutions within these thematic areas and implementation has begun on all the resolutions.

Overall progress on implementation

Some resolutions have achieved several milestones. For example, significant progress has been made in the implementation of resolution 2/11 on marine plastic litter and microplastics. The Environment Programme established an advisory group to guide the development of the assessment of the effectiveness of relevant international, regional and subregional governance strategies and approaches to combat marine plastic litter and microplastics. Support is being provided to the development and revision of marine litter action plans in several countries and to the implementation of existing action plans in others. The Clean Seas campaign was launched by the Environment Programme in February 2017, with the aim of engaging Governments, the general public, civil society and the private sector in the fight against marine plastic litter. Over thirty countries have joined the campaign to date. The commitments made by those countries are displayed on the website of the Clean Seas campaign

Under resolution 2/14 on illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products, the Environment Programme has worked with the International Union for Conservation of Nature and the International Institute for Environment and Development to develop a thorough assessment of best practices in local community involvement in wildlife management. The analysis has been shared widely for review with partners. In the report, lessons learned from decades of experience in community-based wildlife management around the world are compared with recent experience gained since the beginning of the current wildlife trade crisis. The Environment Programme, through the World Conservation Monitoring Centre has initiated work to assess and quantify the multiple threats to wildlife and biodiversity, such as illegal trade in wildlife, as well as habitat conversion, hunting and invasive alien species. The Environment Programme has also supported the development and implementation of national legislation related to illegal trade in wildlife in four countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Plans are under way to extend technical legal assistance to seven other countries in various parts of the world. The One United Nations global #WildforLife campaign launched by the secretariat of the Environment Programme in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of

Wild Fauna and Flora and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in May 2016 has now reached over 1 billion people around the world.

Under resolution 2/6 on supporting the Paris Agreement, the Environment Programme provided assistance to 35 countries in the preparation of their intended nationally determined contributions before the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and is preparing a new programme to provide in-depth support to 10 additional countries over the next four years. The Environment Programme has been supporting countries in strengthening their legal and regulatory frameworks, including by providing guides and toolkits, and is also supporting countries in the implementation of adaptation action, with funding provided by the Global Environment Facility, the Adaptation Fund and the Green Climate Fund.

These are just a few examples of achievements that have been made. Though more advancement has been made on some resolutions than others. The resolutions were adopted after the approval of the 2016 – 2017 budget and programme of work cycle. However, the expectation from Member States is that their implementation begin within a pre-approved programme of work that did not include the consideration of future resolutions. This sometimes results in uneven implementation with the resolutions that already have some work already underway within the programme of work, or are topics that are better able to attract extra-budgetary funding achieving more objectives than others.

For example, resources to implement resolution 2/3 on investing in human capacity for sustainable development through environmental education and training have been extremely limited. The global universities partnership forum, held every year up until 2016 to build capacity, share experiences, and galvanize the potential of the network was cancelled in 2017 owing to a lack of resources. This setback compromised the Programme's potential to contribute to the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development and contribute more effectively to building a cadre of young leaders with knowledge on sustainability to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Resolution 2/8 on sustainable consumption and production supports Goal 12 of the Sustainable Development Goals but is the least well-resourced of all the Goals. However, there are high expectations that the United Nations will play an important and catalytic role. To fully implement this resolution would require increased engagement and support from Member States and stakeholders; including increased financial resources, for the delivery of Sustainable Development Goal 12 and implementation of all programmes under the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, and for the work of the International Resource Panel.

Resources to implement resolution 2/9 on the prevention, reduction and reuse of food waste, and to strengthen the work of the UN Environment Programme to combat food waste have also been extremely limited thus far. To further develop the activities and programmes for the long term, additional core and extra-budgetary resources will be needed. The same can be said for resolution 2/13 Sustainable management of natural capital for sustainable development and poverty eradication.

Lack of resources are not the only limitations; some resolutions require actions from other stakeholders to be fully implemented. For example, full implementation of resolution 2/14 would require member states, intergovernmental organizations, donors and civil society to

ensure that any strategies, action plans, programmes and projects to combat the unsustainable use of and illegal trade in wildlife fully recognize, integrate and implement key insights from extensive research and practice on community wildlife management, including with respect to enforcement strategies.

This is not to say that every effort is not being made to address the resolutions and the resolutions often enrich the portfolio of projects in the sub-programmes, but there some for which more progress could be made.

Updates for resolutions in which reports were requested from the Executive Director for the Third Assembly have been made available as part of the package of pre-session documents; including progress made and recommendations and suggested actions.

Consideration by the Assembly of programme and budgetary implications of resolutions for their full and successful implementation

It is anticipated that the Third Assembly will adopt several resolutions for which it is expected that implementation will begin in the following year, however, the 2018 – 2019 Programme of Work and Budget have already been approved. This places an additional pressure on the sub-programmes to seek extra-budgetary funding to meet the expectations set out in the resolutions and can result in uneven implementation.

The Assembly may want to consider how to address how to line up the adoption of resolutions with the programme and budget cycles or to ensure that resolutions have adequate funding before the Fourth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, which will take place in 2019.