

UN Environment & the Global Environment Facility

# A natural partnership for our planet



Climate change, desertification, species loss, deforestation, floods and famine – these are the very real shared challenges we are facing as a planet in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, challenges that cannot be ignored.

For over 40 years, UN Environment has been the world's leading environmental advocate, delivering scientific insight, setting the global agenda on the environment, offering solutions and providing leadership on critical environmental issues.

Our mission requires working closely with all stakeholders, from governments, the private sector and investors to civil society, scientists and individuals. But one particular partner that stands out is the Global Environment Facility (GEF). In a collaboration that spans more than 25 years, UN Environment and the GEF

“We support UN Environment not only because it is an institution that is very dear to us, but most importantly, because it plays such a crucial role for the world.”

Franz Perez, Head of International Affairs, Swiss Federal Office for the Environment

have developed a strong alliance, building on our synergies to deliver urgently needed action and long-lasting change.

As a founding partner of the GEF, with the UN Development Programme and the World Bank, UN Environment has a close and enduring relationship with the Facility. Just some of the strengths underpinning the UN Environment- GEF partnership include:

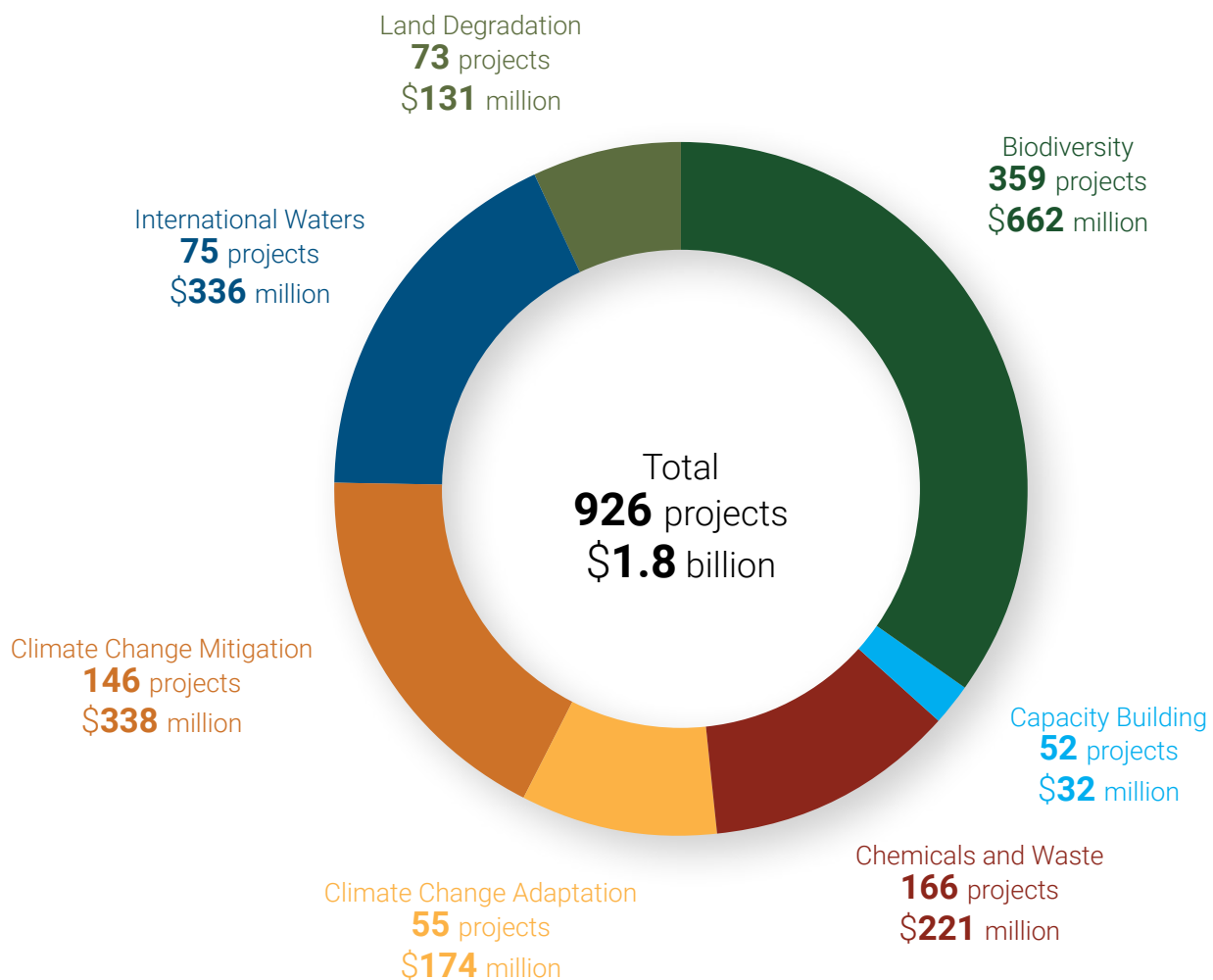
- UN Environment hosts and administers many Multilateral Environmental Agreements, a number of which have designated the GEF as their financial mechanism
- UN Environment is the world's leading environmental authority, setting international standards for policy and providing direction to international initiatives based on scientific knowledge. The GEF is the single largest source of funding for action on global environmental concerns
- UN Environment hosts the GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel, which works with leading experts and practitioners around the world to provide vital know-how and advice to the broader GEF partnership

These linkages underpin a natural partnership. Together UN Environment and the GEF have financed and implemented a wide range of landmark environmental projects – projects that have set new standards, demonstrated new methodologies and transformed the environment and people's lives.

# The UN Environment-GEF partnership

The partnership between UN Environment and the GEF goes back to 1991, on the eve of the first Rio Summit, when UN Environment, together with the UN Development Programme and the World Bank, created the GEF as a three-year pilot facility. A quarter-century later, the GEF is a mature and well-established financial mechanism for five Multilateral Environmental Agreements, providing a key source of funding for projects implemented by 18 GEF agency partners.

Since its formation, the GEF has entrusted over \$1.8 billion to UN Environment to implement more than 900 projects across all the Facility's focal areas – biodiversity, chemicals and waste, climate change adaptation and mitigation, international waters, and land degradation – and in capacity development.



All dollar (\$) amounts refer to US dollars.



# Why UN Environment?

At UN Environment, we help catalyze action by bringing together policy, scientific, and traditional knowledge from around the world. In doing so, we build on our extensive experience and capacity in project implementation, including over 1,200 expert UN Environment staff and active networks bringing together the world's leading environmental actors.



## Global policy

UN Environment has been integral to the negotiation and implementation of a range of Multilateral Environmental Agreements, bringing together nations and the environmental community to tackle the greatest challenges of our time. We currently host the

secretariats of 11 Conventions and Protocols, including three for which the GEF is the financial mechanism, in addition to the secretariats of six Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans. These include:

**Abidjan Convention**  
(Regional Seas Convention)



**Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora**

**Action Plan for the East Asian Seas Region**  
(Regional Seas Convention)



**Convention of Migratory Species**

**Action Plan for the Northwest Pacific Region**  
(Regional Seas Convention)



**Minamata Convention**  
(with GEF as the financial mechanism)



**Bamako Convention**

**Montreal Protocol**  
(Ozone Secretariat)



**Barcelona Convention & Mediterranean Action Plan**  
(Regional Seas Convention)



**Nairobi Convention**  
(Regional Seas Convention)



**Basel Convention**

**Rotterdam Convention**

**Carpathian Convention**

**Stockholm Convention**  
(with GEF as the financial mechanism)



**Cartagena Convention & Caribbean Environment Programme**  
(Regional Seas Convention)



**Tehran Convention**  
(Regional Seas Convention)



**Convention on Biological Diversity**  
(with GEF as the financial mechanism)



**Vienna Convention**  
(Ozone Secretariat)



## Technical expertise and resources



With our dedicated team of scientists and experts, UN Environment has both the mandate and the capacity to effectively monitor the world's environmental resources. The knowledge and information gained from our work is shared through a range of platforms including:

- **UN Environment Assembly:** The 'parliament for the environment' brings together all 193 UN member states, as well as representatives from civil society and the private sector. Hosted by UN Environment, it is the world's highest-level environmental decision-making body. The Assembly builds on the work of regional fora, which identify and escalate issues for international debate
- **International Resource Panel:** Established by UN Environment in 2007, the Panel includes scientists, governments, industrial and international organizations, and civil society. Evaluating the latest scientific, technical and socio-economic information, eminent scientific experts advise policymakers on how to achieve sustainable resource management
- **Global Environment Outlook:** This flagship UN Environment publication is a periodic analysis and assessment of the state of the environment, linking science to policy, and informing decision-making at multiple levels. More than 1,200 scientists and 160 governments provide assessments that are then reviewed by science and policy experts before being compiled into the Global Environment Outlook report
- **Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services:** More than one thousand scientists around the world contribute to this forum that promotes the effective use of science in decision-making to conserve biodiversity and encourage sustainable development. UN Environment

was instrumental in its establishment, including facilitating the negotiations and hosting the interim secretariat, and now co-administers the Platform with the UN Organization for Education, Science and Culture, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and the United Nations Development Programme

- **Climate and Clean Air Coalition:** Launched in 2012, the Coalition addresses short-lived climate pollutants such as methane, black carbon and hydrofluorocarbons. UN Environment hosts the secretariat and helped create the coalition, which now has over 100 members. A panel of 13 scientists keeps the Coalition abreast of new scientific developments on short-lived climate pollutants. The fast hydrofluorocarbons phasedown prescribed in the Montreal Protocol's Kigali Amendment, which came partly as a result of advocacy by the Coalition and member nations, is just one example of the Coalition's impact
- **Climate Technology Centre and Network:** Hosted by UN Environment and the UN Industrial Development Organization, the Centre promotes the transfer of environmentally sound technologies for low-carbon and climate-resilient development. It provides developing countries with technical solutions, capacity building and advice on legal, policy and regulatory matters
- **Online Courses:** UN Environment has helped develop a number of online courses that are available to all free of charge. Topics include: *Wicked Problems*; *Dynamic solutions: The Ecosystem Approach and Systems Thinking*; *Safe and Resilient Cities*; *The E-waste Challenge*; *Environmental Security and Sustaining Peace*

The wide range of relevant knowledge and experience provided by UN Environment represents a reliable foundation upon which the GEF and countries can depend for project implementation.



# Examples of UN Environment-GEF projects that set new standards:

- **Millennium Ecosystem Assessment:** This landmark report was the first to demonstrate the link between natural resources, sustainable livelihoods and poverty alleviation. Tapping the knowledge of a large group of social and natural scientists, the assessment provided a crucial baseline appraisal of the world's ecosystems, the services they provide, and the threats to human wellbeing posed by their degradation. The report popularized the concept of ecosystem services and has been a global catalyst for action to protect and restore our environment

"The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment is a very powerful consensus about the unsustainable trajectory that most of the world's ecosystems are now on."

Professor Sir John Lawton, former chief executive, Natural Environment Research Council

- **Integrated Management of Peatlands for Biodiversity and Climate Change:** This project helped rehabilitate more than 30,000 hectares of peatlands in the Russian Federation, China and Indonesia, and inspired national and regional initiatives aimed at protecting hundreds of thousands more
- **Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions with Bus Rapid Transit and Non-Motorized Transport:** Creating more than 5,000 jobs and attracting \$150 million in

investment, this project established a Bus Rapid Transit system in Cartagena, Colombia, and spawned similar initiatives in major cities in Indonesia, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya

- **Total Sector Methyl Bromide Phase-Out:** This project successfully eliminated the use of the ozone-depleting chemical methyl bromide in agriculture and food storage and helped develop the use of non-chemical alternatives across seven countries. Follow-up projects are now successfully scaling up these results elsewhere
- **Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand:** Resource-rich, politically contested and vital to the livelihoods of millions of people in its 10 surrounding countries and territories, the South China Sea is one of the world's richest marine ecosystems. By creating national management plans and databases on mangroves, non-oceanic coral reefs, seagrass and coastal wetland habitats, this project developed a framework for the joint management of the coastal areas and waters of seven countries in the South China Sea and the Gulf of Thailand, guiding the transboundary cooperation needed to protect and preserve these ecosystems and the services they provide
- **Desert Margins Programme:** Focused on combatting land degradation in nine African countries, this project achieved the restoration of 3,000 hectares of degraded land in Zimbabwe and Kenya, and the introduction of community management for 150,000 hectares of rangeland in Namibia, Botswana and South Africa





While the UN Environment-GEF partnership has produced many notable successes, it also undertakes many important, but lower-profile activities. For example, GEF 'enabling activities' aim to assist countries to understand the status and threats, identify priorities and make informed decisions while building capacity and sharing knowledge and international best practices. These small projects are building blocks that enable countries to regularly report to and honour their commitments to Multilateral Environmental Agreements. In short, GEF enabling activities allow the broader system of international environmental governance to function.

156 countries have benefited from UN Environment's support in enabling activities for the following conventions;

### Convention on Biological Diversity

- National Reports to the Convention on Biological Diversity
- National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans
- National Interim Reports to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing
- National Reports to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety
- Development of National Biosafety Frameworks
- Clearing House Mechanism Enabling Activities

### United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

- National Reports to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
- National Action Programmes and Reporting Processes

### United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

- National Communications
- Biennial Update Reports
- Preparation of (Intended) Nationally Determined Contributions
- Technology Needs Assessments
- Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency
- Preparation of National Adaptation Plans of Action
- National Adaptation Plans

### Minamata Convention

- Minamata Initial Assessments
- National Action Plans for Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining

### Stockholm Convention

- National Implementation Plans
- National Implementation Plan Updates

### Capacity Building for Convention Implementation

- National Capacity Self-Assessments for Global Environmental Management

# Working together for a sustainable future

Given the unprecedented threats currently facing the global environment, it is clear that we need to take immediate action on an international scale to halt the degradation of our planet. UN Environment is at the forefront of mobilizing this action and searching for practical solutions that make a difference to the lives of ordinary people.

We also continuously endeavour to identify and highlight emerging issues of global concern. The UN Environment *Frontiers 2016* report presents five such issues:

- **Finance:** The financial sector needs to increase support for environmental sustainability. The UN Environment Finance Initiative helped develop the Natural Capital Protocol – a framework that allows organizations to identify, measure and value their impacts and dependencies on natural capital. A planned supplement will provide the guidance required for financial institutions to integrate natural capital considerations into all financial products and services. In addition, UN Environment’s Inquiry into the Design of a Sustainable Finance System works on aligning the global financial system with sustainable development. The Inquiry’s work helped put green finance on the G7 and G20 agendas, while policy action has more than doubled over the last five years
- **Loss of ecosystems:** Climate change and human activity continue to damage and destroy ecosystems. Future UN Environment-GEF projects will continue to help countries conserve their ecosystems, and account for the real value of biodiversity and ecosystem services in policy development and financial planning
- **Microplastics:** At the UN Environment Assembly in 2016, world leaders discussed a draft resolution on Marine Plastic Debris and Microplastics. It called for the phasing-out of primary microplastic particles in things such as health and beauty products, industrial abrasives and printing products, and replacing them with non-hazardous alternatives. UN Environment’s Clean Seas campaign has focused

global attention on the plastic crisis facing our oceans, an increasing number of countries committing to eliminating major sources of marine litter by 2022

- **Wildlife:** ‘Exotic consumerism’, or the trade in live wild animals, is just one part of the \$23 billion illegal wildlife trade. The ‘Go Wild for Life’ campaign launched by UN Environment in 2016 has enrolled a number of famous personalities and called on people around the world to raise awareness and decrease demand for illegal wildlife products
- **Toxins in crops:** Pollution can lead to the accumulation of toxins in crops, but so too can climate change. Drought, floods and extreme heat can cause the plants to produce chemicals that are toxic to humans and animals. Activities to reduce pollution and mitigate climate change are already an integral part of UN Environment-GEF projects, and will be even more important in the future as we continue to fight for global food security

The complexity and impact of environmental problems is increasing dramatically, with many issues affecting multiple sectors, countries and regions. UN Environment already demonstrates an integrated approach to environmental issues, and will deepen it through future work. This is consistent with the GEF’s objective of encouraging programmes that deliver global benefits in multiple focal areas.

Such holistic, multi-focal area and cross-cutting approaches are vital in addressing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 193 countries that have adopted the 17 goals set by this Agenda can depend on the support of the UN Environment-GEF partnership to support them in achieving their targets.

With an alliance already stretching back over a quarter-century, the UN Environment-GEF partnership is well placed for another 25 years of close collaboration. Together, we will continue to help countries to rise to their challenges and secure a sustainable environment for many generations to come.

## To find out how to work with us, please contact

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