

# Global Environmental Governance

## What is global environmental governance?

**Global environmental governance** refers to all the rules, procedures and institutions that direct the processes of global environmental protection. Environmental issues became part of the international agenda in the early 1970s. Since then, policies and politics have developed very quickly—exceeding their original scope, and **providing a basis for a coordinated system to affect tangible, long-term improvements to the environment, worldwide.**

## What is the role of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in global environmental governance?

UNEP helps governments lay the groundwork for smart environmental laws and policies that fulfil environmental and human rights obligations and help protect the environment. This includes availing environmental information – to governments as they make decisions and to citizens who should know their rights; helping governments to develop and implement national and international environmental law, and to promote, protect and respect environmental rights; facilitating global and regional cooperation; encouraging collaboration between governments and civil society; and supporting regional dialogue on the goals articulated in international environmental agreements.

In addition to its role as a coordinator of actors in the environmental sector, UNEP contributes to the **broader goals**, outlined by **Agenda 2030** and elaborated in the **Sustainable Development Goals**.

## How does global environmental governance work, in the context of a global pandemic?

Meetings of governing bodies are being conducted online, following guidance to minimize large

gatherings and practice physical distancing during efforts to minimize the spread of the global pandemic coronavirus (COVID-19).. This has allowed UNEP and the multilateral environment agreements (MEAs) it supports to remain active and engaged, and to sustain momentum on important environmental priorities.

Currently, UNEP is reviewing legal, logistical, environmental and political implications of holding virtual meetings, which would be low carbon and more environmentally friendly, while retaining their participatory nature.

Recently, the UNEP Committee of Permanent Representatives held its 150th meeting virtually, and MEAs are also moving ahead virtually—as, for example, with the Twelfth Meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group of the Basel Convention in June 2020.

## Will global environmental governance change long-term as a result of the global pandemic?

Throughout the unprecedented experience of COVID-19 pandemic, UNEP is emphasizing the importance of maintaining and promoting coherence, integration and coordination at all levels of environmental governance. This includes work across the different thematic MEA clusters; collective responses to international crises—including pandemics like COVID-19; and support to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Moving forward, UNEP will coordinate closely with MEAs and its own governing bodies, inter-governmental fora, governments and stakeholders in formulating and implementing solutions for modern global environmental governance and virtual diplomacy.