

Committee of Permanent Representatives  
Subcommittee Meeting  
Tuesday 14 July 2020  
9:00 – 12:00  
Online Meeting

**Background Document for Agenda Item 2: UNEP Mid-Term Strategy narrative and budget approach**

This document outlines a narrative for UNEP's MTS 2022-2025 for review and guidance by the CPR Subcommittee. It includes the broad issues and priority elements that will provide the basis for further development of the MTS and the PoW.

## UNEP Medium-Term Strategy [2022-2025] - Draft Narrative

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## 1) Introduction & Background

The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) of UNEP, at its fourth session in March 2019, requested the Executive Director of UNEP to prepare a Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) for 2022-2025 and a Programme of Work and Budget (PoW) for 2022–2023 for approval at its fifth session in March 2021 (UNEA decision 4/1).

The MTS sets out the vision and strategic direction for UNEP activities for the period 2022-2025. The MTS will frame UNEP's Programme of Work (PoW), which details the results framework against which UNEP's performance will be measured.

The Strategy rests on the principle of putting people at the centre of the environmental dimension of sustainable development, as reflected in "The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," as well as in paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20), *The Future We Want*<sup>1</sup>.

The framework for developing the MTS includes UNEA resolutions and relevant Governing Council decisions, General Assembly resolutions, Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), and their relevant strategic plans, action plans and resolutions/decisions, and other internationally agreed environmental goals.

Through its MTS, UNEP will serve Member States and seize the opportunity to strengthen the organization. The latest science is a foundation of UNEP's MTS, which is supported by a coherent, transformational focus that can 'shift the needle' towards sustainable development by addressing key environmental challenges such as climate change, nature loss, and pollution, in the context of sustainable consumption and production, while at the same time contributing to global recovery in a post-COVID-19 world. To address these challenges, and fulfil UNEP's mission, the focus of UNEP's delivery in the four-year term of this Strategy will be centred around three strategic pillars: climate Resilience; towards a pollution-free planet and living in harmony with nature.

## 2) Situation Analysis

**Our transformed planet: how the climate, nature and pollution crises are affecting the world's ability to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**

- 1. The magnitude and confluence of the climate, nature and pollution crises will affect the world's ability to eradicate poverty, achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change – our roadmap for the future – making the environmental agenda, more central than ever.** As illustrated by the recent findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the International Resource Panel (IRP), and others, there is every indication that the overall global state of the environment is deteriorating and deteriorating at the expense of the global poor, especially in least developed countries. For instance, IPCC has estimated that "global warming is likely to reach 1.5°C between 2030 and 2052 if it continues to increase at the current rate"<sup>2</sup>. IPBES has mentioned that "taking into consideration that the Sustainable Development Goals are integrated, indivisible, and nationally implemented, current

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/rio20\\_outcome\\_document\\_complete.pdf](https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/rio20_outcome_document_complete.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Global Warming of 1.5°C*, 2018, <http://www.ipcc.ch/report/sr15/>.

negative trends in biodiversity and ecosystems will undermine progress towards 80 per cent (35 out of 44) of the assessed targets of Goals related to poverty, hunger, health, water, cities, climate, oceans and land (Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 3, 6, 11, 13, 14, and 15)<sup>3</sup>. The International Resource Panel has noted that “historical and current patterns of natural resource use are resulting in increasingly negative impacts on the environment and human health.”<sup>4 5</sup>

**A highly uncertain and volatile economic, social, and political outlook: how the decline of human development, the rise of inequality, and challenges to the multilateral order risk inhibiting environmental dimensions of sustainable development.**

1. **The macro-economic outlook has significantly dampened with COVID-19, accelerating inequalities across the world, and threatening to wipe out significant progress in sustainable development.** In its World Economic Outlook Update (June 2020), the International Monetary Fund projected global growth at -4.9 percent in 2020, 1.9 percent points below its previous forecast published two months earlier. It also predicts “a particularly acute negative impact of the pandemic on low-income households worldwide that could significantly raise inequality”. UNDP warned that global human development was set to decline in 2020 for the first time in twenty years<sup>6</sup>.
2. **Rising socio-economic inequality and inequity is not only deepening divisions between the haves and have-nots but there is greater concern of backsliding on poverty gains made over the decades.** Prior to COVID-19, it is estimated that inequality had been steadily increasing for more than 70% of the global population<sup>7</sup>, exacerbating divisions between and within countries. As of June 2020, the World Bank estimates that impacts of COVID-19 would push a further 71 million into extreme poverty in 2020 – reversing gains made since 2017, especially in achieving SDG 1. Megatrends or global forces such as technological innovation, urbanization, migration, and climate change are having a further compounding impact that can exacerbate such inequality. Climate migrants comprise some of the world’s most vulnerable and destabilized populations. By 2050, over 143 million people in three regions – Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America – comprising 2.8% the region’s population, would have been pushed into internal migration, in large part as a result of climatic impact. These contexts have serious implications for those most vulnerable, meaning that resilience building and risk reduction and adaptation are urgently needed to ensure growing portions of the population are not left behind. This is particularly urgent in conflict-affected areas and countries experiencing complex crises, where climate and environmental justice may be most difficult to implement.
3. **Persistent poverty and rising socio-economic inequality and inequity threaten gains made over the decades and deepens divisions at all levels.** Before COVID-19, it is estimated that inequality had been steadily increasing for more than 70% of the global population, exacerbating divisions between and within countries. As of June 2020, the World Bank estimates that the impacts of COVID-19 would push a further 71 million into extreme poverty in 2020 – reversing gains made

<sup>3</sup> IPBES Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, “Summary for Policymakers of the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services,” November 2019, <https://doi.org/10.5281/ZENODO.3553579>.

<sup>4</sup> International Resource Panel, *Global Resources Outlook 2019: Natural Resources for the Future We Want* (United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), 2019), <https://www.resourcepanel.org/reports/global-resources-outlook>.

<sup>5</sup> This section will be further elaborated to build on the forthcoming Synthesis of evidence from global environmental assessments (UNEP, 2020). This will provide an aggregate and authoritative perspective from the landscape of global scientific assessments, such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and the Global Environment Outlook (GEO)

<sup>6</sup> This section will be further elaborated using data from *inter alia*, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *COVID-19 and Human Development: Assessing the Crisis, Envisioning the Recovery* (UNDP, 2020), <http://hdr.undp.org/en/hdp-covid; 2020>; *World Economic Situation and Prospects as of mid-2020* (UNDESA, May 2020)

<sup>7</sup> *World Social Report: Inequality in a Rapidly Changing World*. (New York: United Nations, 2020).

since 2017, especially in achieving SDG 1. Megatrends or global forces such as technological innovation, urbanization, migration, and climate change are having a further compounding impact that can exacerbate such inequality. Climate migrants comprise some of the world's most vulnerable and destabilized populations. By 2050, over 143 million people in three regions – Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America – comprising 2.8% the region's population, would have been pushed into internal migration, in large part because of climatic impact. Environmental pressures can cause conflict and violence. Soil degradation, freshwater scarcity, food shortage, coupled with social pressures such as poverty, socioeconomic factors, contribute to these risks. In communities that are agricultural dependent, especially in a low income context, drought can intensify violence and conflicts leading to social instability and migration.<sup>8</sup> These contexts have serious implications for those most vulnerable, meaning that resilience building, and risk reduction and adaptation are urgently needed to ensure growing portions of the population are not left behind. Land degradation also decreases resilience to environmental stresses: increased vulnerability, especially of the poor, women and children, can intensify competition for scarce natural resources and result in migration, instability, and conflict. Globally 24% of the land is degrading and more than 1.5 billion people directly depends on these degrading lands and 74% of them live in poverty<sup>9</sup>. This is particularly urgent in conflict-affected areas and countries experiencing complex crises, where climate and environmental justice may be most difficult to implement.

4. **Gender equality and rights-based approach are critical to end all forms of discrimination and make progress towards environmental sustainability.** The gendered impact of climate change has revealed the uneven burden carried by women, comprising 80% of those displaced by climate change<sup>10</sup>. Women are responsible for 60-80% of food production in developing countries<sup>11</sup>. In addition, women who play an often-critical role as environmental defenders, are often excluded from land ownership and decisions, as prevailing laws and customary practices in half of the world's countries restricting their rights to access land<sup>12</sup>. This is further compounded by a low level of political representation, with only 25% of parliamentary seats in governments around the world<sup>13</sup> held by women. A stocktaking of the Beijing Declaration, twenty-five years after its adoption, reveals that “major gaps remain and that obstacles, including structural barriers, discriminatory practices and the feminization of poverty, persist”<sup>14</sup>. Estimates indicate that it will take 99.5 years to achieve gender parity globally.
5. **Seventy-five years on from the signing of the Charter, the importance of environmental multilateralism remains as relevant as ever.** Global challenges, such as the climate emergency and the COVID-19 pandemic are a clear indication of this continued relevance. According to the Global Risks Report 2020, the top five global risks are all climate-related, overshadowing other economic, geopolitical, technological, or societal factors<sup>15</sup>. In its economic outlook for 2020, the UN warned of geopolitical risks: “amid a weakening commitment to multilateralism whether in

<sup>8</sup> UNCCD Global Land Outlook, "Land under pressure, Health under stress" 2019 <https://knowledge.unccd.int/publication/land-under-pressure-health-under-stress>

<sup>9</sup> UNCCD Global Land Outlook, "Land under pressure, Health under stress" 2019

<sup>10</sup> Senay Habtezion, "Overview of Linkages between Gender and Climate Change. Policy Brief" (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2016), <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/womens-empowerment/gender-and-climate-change.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), "Quick Guide to What and How: Increasing Women's Access to Land" (Sida, September 2009), <https://www.sida.se/English/publications/111176/quick-guide-to-what-and-how-increasing-womens-access-to-land/>.

<sup>12</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), "Social Institutions & Gender Index: 2014 Synthesis Report" (OECD, 2014), <http://www.oecd.org/development/gender-development/BrochureSIGI2015-web.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> "Women in Parliament: 1995–2020 - 25 Years in Review" (Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), 2020), <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2020-03/women-in-parliament-1995-2020-25-years-in-review>.

<sup>14</sup> Commission on the Status of Women, "Political Declaration on the Occasion of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women. Document E/CN.6/2020/L.1" (United Nations, March 2020), <https://undocs.org/en/E/CN.6/2020/L.1>.

<sup>15</sup> World Economic Forum, "The Global Risks Report 2020" (World Economic Forum, January 2020), <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-risks-report-2020>.

the economic or political arena— the capacity of the international community to contain and resolve conflicts has decreased”. Yet, preventing the further erosion of multilateralism will prove essential for achieving the 2030 Agenda – an important milestone will be reached in 2025 when the UN turns eighty and this MTS cycle comes to an end.

**Responding to the needs of Member States in an age of interdependence: how to seize the opportunities created by UN reform, enhance the provision of environmental data, and ensure that the digital revolution helps deliver, not hinder, the 2030 Agenda.**

1. **UN reform offers the promise to significantly enhance services to Member States, including with the provision of a strengthened ‘UNEP voice’ through UN Resident Coordinators and Country Teams.** As a corollary, this means a greater opportunity than ever of fulfilling Paragraph 88 of *The Future We Want*. Much hope can be placed on the decision by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, in May 2020, to “develop a common approach to integrating biodiversity and nature-based solutions for sustainable development into the UN’s policy and programme planning and delivery”<sup>16</sup>. Coordinated work across the UN on Common Country Analysis and the SDG Voluntary National Reviews, through the UN Country Teams, has already demonstrated the potential for promoting the integration of the environment in SDG analysis and implementation.
2. **There is a strong demand for up-to-date, quality-assured, credible, and relevant environmental data, statistics, and environmental-economic accounts to support integration efforts across the UN system as well as at national and regional levels.** In addition to contributing to the delivery of the Secretary General’s Data Strategy for 2020-2022<sup>17</sup>, options for ensuring stronger integration of environmental data and analysis include: 1) engaging in the One UN development and use of statistics and accounting to promote sustainable development; 2) enhancing, through the Environmental Management Group, multi-agency collaboration on environmental indicators and monitoring and scaling-up actions informed by environmental statistics and science, including integrated analyses across the three pillars of sustainable development; and 3) bolstering engagement with UN Country Teams to support the design of plans to monitor the environmental dimension of the SDG and the implementation of the Cape Town Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data<sup>18</sup> as well as on National Strategies for the Development of Statistics.
3. **The world’s environmental and social crises cannot be solved by GDP growth alone: Inclusive Wealth statistics can help guide policy efforts towards enhancing the capacity of Member States to deliver the 2030 Agenda.** The following can help to identify the links between natural assets, poverty, and inequality in a post-pandemic society: 1) update Inclusive Wealth accounting by extending the data of natural capital over countries; 2) link pollution and human capital in wealth-centric economy arising in the post-pandemic world and hence estimate human capital as well; 3) automate and digitalize Inclusive Wealth data collection; 4) assess how inequality and poverty arising from the impacts of COVID-19 in developing countries have interfered with resilience and the condition of ecosystems and biodiversity; and 5) ensure a better measurement and management of assets that underpin human, environmental, institutional, and economic progress.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/note-correspondents/2020-05-14/note-correspondents-the-virtual-meeting-of-the-chief-executives-board>

<sup>17</sup> United Nations, “Data Strategy of the Secretary General: For Action by Everyone, Everywhere with Insight, Impact and Integrity. 2020-2022” (United Nations, June 2020), <https://www.un.org/en/content/datastrategy/index.shtml>.

<sup>18</sup> <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/hlg/cape-town-global-action-plan/>

4. **Institutions, at all levels, need to keep pace with the speed and scale of technological innovation in the digital space.** – at the same time, the digitalization of the planet offers a massive opportunity to hardwire environmental sustainability, resilience, and transparency into the code of a new planetary operating system. The digitalization of the economy is changing many aspects of our lives and will require enhanced cooperation across the UN and beyond<sup>19</sup>. Digital technology is moving faster than society’s ability to govern it. There is a growing understanding that, beyond the technological revolution is a societal leap. Power, trust, and democratic institutions are shifting in many directions simultaneously. Full transparency on the environmental and carbon footprints of different products and services, as well as the performance of companies, governments, and citizens is now within reach. Environmental data and analytics are becoming the lifeblood of decision-making, the engine of resilience which is the raw material for accountability.

### Lessons Learned

**UNEP strives for continuous improvement, drawing on a range of internal and external reviews and dialogue with Member States to identify such opportunities.** Many lessons from monitoring, evaluations, inspections, and audits have informed the design of the MTS.

In considering the development of this MTS, UNEP has taken on board lessons learned from the implementation of its previous MTS cycles, towards:

**Embedding Transformative Change in thematic and enabling programmes.** New pathways for transformative change often face difficulties competing with the existing mainstream (i.e., business as usual) systems. UNEP will actively consider how to bring about break-through societal changes, structural transformations, and exponential impacts. Transition management, advocating disruptive strategies for change, will play a role as part of the business model to catalyze effort at the beginning of a ‘steep learning curve’ and steward the work until a ‘take-off’ stage.

**Increasing its commitment to gender equality and women’s empowerment in promoting the environmental dimension of sustainable development.** Gender equality issues will be carefully examined in their relation to the environment and to enable UNEP to strengthen the ability to articulate and embed gender perspectives in policy development and implementation. UNEP will ensure that gender analysis informs all planning and project design and that gender considerations are fully reflected in monitoring frameworks and implementation. Similarly, all data used in project planning, setting baselines, and monitoring will be disaggregated by sex. Gaps in data and statistics, which can be used to measure these priority issues, identified by the Global Gender and Environment Outlook (2016)<sup>20</sup>, will be addressed. UNEP, in line with United Nations Environmental Assembly (UNEA 4), Resolution 4/17, “Promoting gender equality and the human rights and empowerment of women and girls in environmental governance,” will increase its cooperation on gender issues with other entities inside and outside the UN System.

**Aligning with UN system-wide imperatives including the Secretary General’s prevention agenda to ensure that, in increasingly complex contexts around the world, UNEP contributes to the prevention and reduction of significant risks<sup>21</sup>.** These risks include increasing vulnerability of rural and indigenous

<sup>19</sup> United Nations, “Report of the Secretary-General: Roadmap for Digital Cooperation” (United Nations, June 2020), <https://www.un.org/en/content/digital-cooperation-roadmap/>.

<sup>20</sup> [https://www.unenvironment.org/resources/report/global-gender-and-environment-outlook-ggeo#:~:text=The%20Global%20Gender%20and%20Environment%20Outlook%20\(GGEO\)%20Critical%20issues%20was,SDGs%20and%202030%20Development%20agenda.](https://www.unenvironment.org/resources/report/global-gender-and-environment-outlook-ggeo#:~:text=The%20Global%20Gender%20and%20Environment%20Outlook%20(GGEO)%20Critical%20issues%20was,SDGs%20and%202030%20Development%20agenda.)

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.un.org/sg/en/priorities/prevention.shtml>

populations who rely on ecosystem services; increasing conflict over resources such as timber, gems, and transboundary waters; and displacement from climate change and intensifying extreme weather events. UNEP commits to improving prevention awareness, knowledge, mechanisms, and systems, and to systematically applying climate-smart, risk-informed and conflict-sensitive approaches to all planning processes. The need to improve these processes has been highlighted by unanticipated Covid-19 impacts on UNEP's work and global environmental conditions.

**Continuing the UNEP transition to results-based management is as much a transformation of UNEP's internal culture as it is a management issue.** UNEP is taking several steps to enhance its capacity to deliver results and impacts. These actions include improving project cycle management, measuring and enhancing UNEP value for money and business models, and strengthening the environmental, social, and economic safeguards policy. UNEP is in a process of continuous improvement through a range of initiatives, including learning best practices from other organizations. As part of this strengthening, UNEP will develop a typology of projects and initiatives to ensure that only those with the potential to drive transformative or systemic change are implemented.

**Working with the Members States and other partners to widen, deepen and secure the resource base necessary for the execution of the MTS.** Securing contributions to the Environment Fund or funding that is only softly earmarked is indispensable if UNEP is to maintain its ability to deliver following the priorities agreed upon by its Member States. UNEP will strategically align funding needs to its comparative advantage, for both core and earmarked funding. UNEP will then, comprehensively review the landscape of potential funding sources and identify opportunities for new partners can contribute towards core and unearmarked resources.

**Recognizing the full impact of UNEP's work -- indicators are an "indication" of work completed and do not always represent the full picture.** To address this UNEP will clarify three levels of results, and particularly where UNEP:

- has a direct role, such as the delivery of products and services;
- provides enabling support for an outcome; or
- has an influence, yet still contributes.

**Using SDG indicators wherever possible in its POW and results framework.** While the SDG indicators are to be achieved by Member States, UNEP's support will be attributed where relevant in the POW. High-level results, including the SDG indicators, must be monitored over a term longer rather than a single biennium or even the four years of the MTS. UNEP will identify parameters for many key areas of engagement, and align these parameters with the 2030 Agenda and Environment Assembly resolutions. Monitoring instruments will allow for this long-term impact and provide flexibility to permit adaptive management for improved delivery.

### 3) Comparative Advantage - UNEP's unique role

#### Mandate and Background

**The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was created in 1972 and mandated to keep the world environment under review. This mandate was renewed forty years later at Rio+20 for UNEP to set the global environmental agenda.** UNEP is mandated to catalyze international and national action and cooperation underpinned by scientific findings, provide policy guidance, coordinate environmental activities within the UN system, and provide support for the implementation of environmental programmes and policies.



**The 1972 Stockholm Conference also established the right to a safe environment that “permits a life of dignity and well-being”.** The creation of UNEP set in motion a very important multilateral chain of follow-up events and conferences leading to the establishment of the paradigm of sustainable development and ultimately to a single integrative development agenda. The milestones leading to the transformative 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals include:

1992: UN Conference on the Environment and Development- environment brought together with social and economics under the paradigm of sustainable development  
 2002: The World Summit on Sustainable Development- reinforced multilateralism to overcome obstacles to achieve sustainable development.  
 2012: United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development: Strengthens and upgrades UNEP and elevates the importance of sustainable consumption and production.

#### 4) Delivering on the 2030 Agenda: A decade for action

**Centrality of the 2012 Rio+20 Conference.** The 2012 Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development and its Outcome Document *The Future We Want* re-designed an evolved UNEP with greater authority in global environmental policymaking with a leading role in promoting environmental sustainability in the post-2015 development agenda -- driven by a stronger science-policy interface.

**Environmental dimensions an essential feature in the SDGs.** With the adoption of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development in 2015, world leaders agreed on 17 SDGs to set the foundation for a global path towards a more balanced, equitable and sustainable future for all – one where the environment takes center place. More than half of the SDGs have an environmental focus or address the sustainability of natural resources, and over 86 of the 169 targets concern the environment directly, including at least one in each of the 17 SDGs.<sup>22</sup> Improving the health of the environment is a foundational and enabling factor in implementing the SDGs.

**An MTS for the Decade of Action.** With only ten years to achieve the aspirations of Agenda 2030 and responding to the Declaration of the General Assembly to gear up for “a decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”, UNEP is faced with a great opportunity to energize actions towards the achievement of the environment-related SDGs. The Secretary General has stressed that as “we enter a decade of action on the Sustainable Development Goals, we have to convince people that the United Nations is relevant to all and that multilateralism offers real solutions to global challenges”<sup>23</sup>. There is a need for “networked multilateralism, bringing together the UN system, regional organisations, international financial institutions and others.”<sup>24</sup> UNEP will seize this opportunity, deploying the following strategic approaches:

1. **UNEP will support an integrated and balanced implementation of the 2030 Agenda.** UNEP will continue to build the capacity of Member States and partners to integrate the environment into all aspects of sustainable development, leveraging interactions and co-benefits among the 17 SDGs. Promoting integrated approaches to planning and implementation will be critical to ensuring that environmental perspectives are incorporated into national plans and policies and that connections are made with other development concerns, such as human rights, gender equality, economic growth, and employment.

<sup>22</sup> A contribution to the global follow-up and review in the 2016 High Level Political Forum (HLPF) on the work of the United Nations Environment Programme, 2016.

<sup>23</sup> Secretary-General, Opening General Assembly Session <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sgsm19746.doc.htm>

<sup>24</sup> Secretary General’s Opening remarks to the Press on the launch of the UN Comprehensive Response to COVID-19 <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2020-06-25/remarks-press-launch-of-un-comprehensive-response-covid-19>

2. **UNEP will focus on delivering transformational results.** UNEP’s planning approach will be in alignment with the target date for the 2030 Agenda and aspire to deliver long-term, transformational impacts beyond the four-year period covered by this strategy. UNEP will identify the drivers of the desired systemic changes that lie at the heart of achieving the environmental dimension of sustainable development, and target them through effective, multi-stakeholder partnerships, platforms and networks. In this context, UNEP will also continue to leverage the linkages with the MEAs, seeking alignment with the post-2020 Biodiversity and Chemicals and Waste frameworks to enhance results that support a coherent delivery of the 2030 Agenda.
3. **UNEP will engage in innovative efforts to close the gap on the availability of environmental data to assess and review progress towards the achievement of the SDGs.**<sup>25</sup> UNEP will continue to identify the best environmental science that integrates social and economic considerations for policy and decision-making and feed it into multiple data gathering, analysis and assessment processes at the national, regional and global levels. UNEP will continue to build the capacities of countries to collect and analyze data relevant to SDG implementation and ease their reporting burdens by building as much as possible on existing data. Central to UNEP’s innovative approach will be the use of cutting-edge technologies and digital tools, including UNEP’s World Environment Situation Room (WESR), as well as more inclusive public advocacy, awareness and outreach efforts to mobilize all those who can influence the changes needed to achieve the SDGs at all levels of society.
4. **UNEP will provide a clear “line-of-sight” for its delivery of Agenda 2030 from the global environmental goals to regional and national action.** UNEP will frame its activities around the global aspirations of the SDGs but deliver them in response to national needs and realities -- considering differing regional integration processes, capacities, and levels of development. Taking full advantage of the UN Reforms to embed environmental priorities in the UN delivery mechanisms, UNEP will work with UN Country Teams (UNCTs) through a strengthened regional strategic presence that will assist in providing environmental data into the design and implementation of projects and activities tailored to the regional and national needs of Member States. Furthermore, through its regional offices, UNEP will increase its engagement with regional interagency mechanisms, including Regional Commissions and fora on sustainable development. A more strategic engagement will ensure increased consensus and better institutional coherence on sustainable development, while reducing transaction costs for Member States and other groups, ultimately increasing a common approach to regional SDG priorities and challenges and related implementation and reporting processes.
5. **UNEP will strengthen South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSCT) as a means of continuing to enable all Member States to progress towards environmental sustainability.** To that end, UNEP will promote SSCT<sup>26</sup> across all of its system policy, programming and partnership activities, while strengthening, at all levels, organization-wide efforts on related engagements and

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<sup>25</sup> *Measuring Progress: Towards Achieving the Environmental Dimension of the SDGs*, published by UNEP in 2019, revealed that “of the 93 environment-related SDGs indicators, there are 22 (23 per cent) for which good progress has been made over the last 15 years. For the other 77 per cent of the environment-related SDGs indicators, there is either not sufficient data to assess progress (68 per cent) or it is unlikely that the target will be met without upscaling action (9 per cent).

<sup>26</sup> South-South cooperation is “a process whereby two or more developing countries pursue their individual and/or shared national capacity development objectives through exchanges of knowledge, skills, resources and technical know-how, and through regional and interregional collective actions, including partnerships involving Governments, regional organisations, civil society, academia and the private sector, for their [...] mutual benefit within and across regions”. Triangular cooperation “involves Southern-driven partnerships between two or more developing countries supported by a developed country(ies) or multilateral organisation(s) to implement cooperation programmes and projects” (as defined in the [Framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation](#), 2016).

institutional capacities.<sup>27</sup> Strengthened regional engagement will enable UNEP to better promote UN system inter-agency linkages and more closely monitor and follow up on strategic and political issues related to SSCT, including through continued engagement with the UN Office for South-South Cooperation and other multilateral system entities, international organizations, civil-society organizations, academia and the private sector. UNEP will also continue to facilitate the transfer of innovative southern solutions towards global sustainability outcomes in support of the implementation of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries.<sup>28</sup>

6. **UNEP will pledge to “leave no one behind”.** UNEP will focus on the special needs of disaster- and conflict-affected states, Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Land-Locked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), in line with the principle of “leaving no one behind” and reaching out to those furthest behind first, as set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These countries face a particular vulnerability to shocks, fragility, and setbacks due to the impacts of climate change, natural hazards, violence, conflict, displacement, health emergencies, economic downturns, price or other shocks, and are some of the key factors in being ‘left behind’ as they work towards the SDGs<sup>29</sup>. The impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic pose an additional threat to any gains that they have achieved in recent years.
7. **UNEP will increase its focus on the special needs of disaster- and conflict-vulnerable or affected states.** Disasters and conflicts are ‘development in reverse’, and UNEP is committed to supporting impacted Member States with the full scope of its support and expertise. In working to tackle risk, UNEP will bring its assistance to UN capacities for early warning and early action, including understanding the linkages between climate change and security; improve preparedness to respond to the environmental dimensions of natural hazards, industrial accidents and armed conflicts; help Member States and UN partners adopt environmental peacebuilding tools; improve the key aspects of resource and environmental governance that contribute to conflict prevention; and support the full implementation of the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction. In its response and recovery work, UNEP will work with humanitarian partners to improve oversight of the environmental impacts of conflict, integrate natural resource and environmental issues into post-disaster or conflict assessments and planning; ensure international response mechanisms fully integrate environmental expertise and issues; and anchor environmental issues within humanitarian and early recovery operations in order to minimize the possible environmental impacts and ensure they do no harm with regard to longer-term vulnerability and development. This work will cut across the three pillars, by helping the most vulnerable build resilience and adapt to climate change, supporting pollution prevention and mitigation in areas that are most at risk, and both protecting and harnessing nature as a tool for peace and resilience.

## Levers of Change

UNEP’s value addition and comparative advantage is anchored across four key levers of change. The following section spells out how UNEP will draw from its comparative advantages to implement its vision for 2022-2025.

1. **Programmes and Projects Driven by Science - Developing integrated policy solutions to help countries “shift the needle” for the environmental dimension of sustainable development.**

<sup>27</sup> UNEP’s Strategy for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, adopted in March 2020, will serve as the guiding framework for all of UNEP’s activities on SSCT during the decade 2020-2030.

<sup>28</sup> Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (BAPA), adopted by the United Nations Technical Cooperation between Developing Countries, 1978.

<sup>29</sup> UNDP “What does it mean to leave no one behind?”, Aug 9, 2018, <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/poverty-reduction/what-does-it-mean-to-leave-no-one-behind-.html>

**Science will be the foundation of UNEP's programmes** and drive the design and implementation of its projects. UNEP will keep the global environment under review and recommend targets and indicators to monitor progress. Statistical evidence that feeds spatial and time-series information systems for environmental monitoring and accounting will expand our knowledge and identify data gaps for integrated policy solutions.

**A typology of projects will be delivered** to ensure optimum efficiency and effectiveness of UNEPs impact. Direct implementation will focus on larger more impactful projects that are designed to: innovate, incubate, and hand over. Where UNEP catalyzes and enables environmental projects implemented by others, legal, policy, technical and scientific support will be founded on the best science and engaging multi-disciplinary actors. Finally, UNEP will influence the work of others through science and advocacy, provided in a timely and constructive manner.

## **2. Promoting implementation and cooperation among the multilateral environmental agreements to enhance UNEP's role as a 'docking station' for the MEAs that UNEP hosts, towards multiplying efforts and impacts to achieve the 2030 Agenda.**

**Centrality of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements.** UNEP hosts 15 Global and Regional MEAs and is well placed to put this advantage into action by promoting cooperation and coherence across the global environment agenda. Whilst fully respecting and maintaining the independence of the MEAs, UNEP's programmatic work will be aligned with MEA decisions, to assist Member States in their respective implementation. In this context, institutionalized dialogue and exchange of information will be the key. Joint messaging and advocacy on environmental issues will be strengthened.

**A strengthened UNEP-MEA cooperation.** Setting common goals and strengthening cooperation with the MEAs will amplify the voice of the UNEP family and step up global responses to environmental challenges as part of the 2030 Agenda, with an enhanced impact on the ground. Results will be catalyzed particularly by scaling up action in cross-cutting areas such as sustainable consumption and production and nexus areas such as human rights, gender, and environment. With the growing awareness on the impacts of unsound management of chemicals and waste on biodiversity, UNEP will support the implementation of the post-2020 biodiversity framework and the strategic approach and sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020. UNEP's Regional Offices will play a key role to play in supporting countries in finding integrated approaches to implementing MEAs as part of the broader 2030 Agenda.

**UNEA – Universal, unique and inclusive.** UNEA will serve as a platform where the international community across different sectors come together to discuss and address global environmental issues. UNEA, as well as the different Conferences of Parties of the MEAs, will provide an opportunity to further promote the visibility of the cooperation between MEAs and UNEP by strengthening convergence and dialogue between the two post-2020 processes, biodiversity and chemicals/waste as well as responses to COVID-19. UNEA will also provide an opportunity for enhancing cooperation between UNEP, MEAs (including those MEAs not hosted by UNEP) and many stakeholders.

## **3. Fulfilling UNEP's coordination mandate within the UN system**

**UNEP providing a stronger environmental voice in the UN.** UNEP will strengthen its participation and engagement in the UN inter-agency mechanisms, strategies, and relationships as they provide effective platforms to promote policy coherence for more coordinated, integrated, and impactful UN System activities while amplifying UNEP's programme delivery.

**Further deepening the critical role of Environmental Management Group.** As chair of the Environmental Management Group (EMG), UNEP will foster collaboration among the EMG membership and promote pathways of harnessing the collective capacity of the EMG in developing coherent management responses. UNEP will work with the EMG membership in encouraging transformational strategic changes for a greener development paradigm in a Post COVID-19 world.

**Developing partnerships with UN sister agencies drawing on respective strengths.** Fostering partnerships with UN System entities will offer additional policy and operational opportunities to strengthen collaboration by leveraging the domain expertise – both technical and operational – of the partner entities.

**Supporting delivery of the UN 2020-2023 Sustainability Strategy.** At UN interagency level, UNEP will step up its efforts to support the implementation of the UN 2020-2030 Sustainability Strategy<sup>30</sup> with enhanced reporting, coordination, and technical assistance to foster UN system corporate environmental performance. UNEP will strengthen and expand its partnerships with the UN and other international organizations to generate knowledge, advocate for, and create a support system that will feed into and enhance the UN leadership vision on corporate sustainability.

**Expanding engagement with Regional Economic Commissions.** At the regional level, UNEP will strengthen its engagement with regional bodies and UN coordination mechanisms, including the Regional Commissions, the Regional Collaboration Platforms<sup>31</sup>, and issue-based coalitions to anchor the mainstreaming of environmental imperatives in programme planning and delivery of the UN System at regional, sub-regional and national levels.

#### 4. Promoting inclusive multilateralism for stronger global environmental governance

**UNEP will continue to value and uphold inclusivity to promote transparent and accountable environment governance at all levels.** In today's rapidly changing environment, UNEP will strive to maintain high scale and ambition in global environmental multilateralism, focusing not only on current challenges and opportunities, but also on emerging needs, and particularly those of future generations.

**Building "inclusive environmental multilateralism".** Nearly thirty years after its adoption at the 1992 Earth Summit, Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration – one of the cornerstones of stakeholder engagement in environmental policy and decision-making – remains as relevant as ever.<sup>32</sup> Powerful young voices part of a revamped worldwide environmental movement has shown the power of individual commitment to influence decisions towards planetary justice. In commemorating the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the UN Charter, the UN Secretary General stressed on the need for "an inclusive multilateralism, drawing on the indispensable contributions of civil society, business, cities, regions and, in particular, with greater weight given to the voices of youth." UNEP will leverage these newfound societal commitments to engage with Major Groups and Stakeholders (MGS)<sup>33</sup> and the public at large, benefitting from strategic partnerships, their effective technical and advocacy

<sup>30</sup> Strategy for Sustainability Management in the UN System 2020-2030 [https://unemg.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/INF\\_3\\_Strategy-for-Sustainability-Management-in-the-UN-System.pdf](https://unemg.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/INF_3_Strategy-for-Sustainability-Management-in-the-UN-System.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> "UN Regional Collaborative Platform" (RCP), will would absorb existing, duplicative coordination mechanisms to foster collaboration on sustainable development across UN development system entities operating at the regional level (ECOSOC resolution E/RES/2019/15)

<sup>32</sup> "Environmental issues are best handled with participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, everyone shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided."

<sup>33</sup> Agenda 21 recognized that sustainable development requires the meaningful involvement and active participation of the following nine 'Major Groups': Business and industry, Children and youth, Farmers, Indigenous Peoples and their communities, Local Authorities, Non-governmental organizations, The Scientific and technological community, Women, Workers and Trade Unions.

functions, as well as increased participation and contribution to the UNEA. As part of this engagement, UNEP will also continue to promote the role of Faith-based Organizations and faith communities as custodians of far-reaching, value-based perspectives to environmental sustainability that speak to billions of people around the world.

**Building back better, greener and more sustainable delivering on the promise of sustainable development.** In the context of COVID-19, UNEP will seize these opportunities for engagement to contribute to building back more inclusive economies and societies, channeling the voices of those most affected by today's decisions that will shape the collective path towards sustainability, including but not limited to women, indigenous peoples and their communities, children and youth.

**Engaging with private sector to drive systemic shifts to sustainable pathways.** In its efforts towards inclusivity, UNEP will place emphasis on its partnership with the private sector. Building on its Strategy for Private Sector Engagement,<sup>34</sup> UNEP will involve the private sector in its capacity of a trusted partner and catalytic force to drive forward the broad systemic shifts that will enable transformational changes towards more sustainable pathways. Through this engagement, UNEP will contribute to the generation of smart policies, informed by state-of-the-art scientific knowledge, as well as environmental data tailored to meet the needs of the private sector, that will enable business transformations while protecting the environment. Some of the areas where UNEP sees value in achieving such systemic and policy shifts include: Energy production and consumption; food systems; infrastructure and the built environment; chemicals and waste management; and the extractive sectors. To create the enabling environments necessary to support these changes, however, broader shifts must also occur in relation to the global financing and market systems. To that end, UNEP will also collaborate with the financial sector with a view to co-financing and re-directing financial flows towards sustainable outcomes, as well as catalysing investments towards solutions that address environmental challenges, particularly in underserved markets within developing countries.

**Multistakeholder engagement with the private sector.** UNEP will engage the private sector at various levels, including through: open networks, policy discussions and multi-stakeholder fora, as well as partnerships, alliances and transactions to target specific objectives, and targeted advocacy actions to promote cultural shift amongst producers and consumers. UNEP will also promote value chain and sector collaboration through joint ventures that are driven by the urgency to transform entire industries and sectors, all while continuing to share best practices and accelerating the uptake of innovative solutions that bring measurable environmental impacts accompanied by economic and social benefits.

##### **5. Communication underpins UNEP's thematic focus areas and is a key driving force for creating enabling environments for improved environmental outcomes.**

**UNEP's strong communications help deliver coherence and consistency....** UNEP will provide an interface for a digital transformation, improved environmental governance, and science for bringing societal and policy changes. UNEP's communication will bring greater coherence and consistency to its messages to ensure it is informed and evidence-based so that the organization speaks as 'one'.

**...and shapes the global environmental narrative.** UNEP's communication will shape global environmental narratives and create a supportive discourse for mobilizing essential resources, generating political and social commitments, and bringing societal and policy changes required for climate stability, living in harmony with nature, and for a pollution-free planet. UNEP uses a combination of approaches for strategic communication, public advocacy, and social mobilization for creating multiple opportunities for social and behavior change. It brings a broad array of relevant

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<sup>34</sup> UNEP, Strategy for Private Sector Engagement, 11 October 2019.

sectors together to raise awareness and empower individuals and groups for environmental action and effecting social and behavior change.

**UNEP's communications will engage wide set of stakeholders using multiple channels.** UNEP will take advantage of its growing foothold in digital spheres and social media spaces for reaching and engaging a diverse and expanding range of audiences and stakeholders. UNEP communication will include voices from sectors and actors typically outside of the environment and enhancing the voices of youth; consumers; environmental entrepreneurs; innovation leaders; faith-based actors and organizations; and activists to effect environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

**UNEP's communication will bring impact stories to help enhanced understanding of environmental sustainability.** UNEP's communication will build visibility for its work, bring recognition to its achievement, and provide a platform for sharing its successes and lessons to the wider audiences. UNEP will highlight impact stories, innovative practices, and case studies for their adaptation to the local context and their delivery at scale. UNEP will help build greater understanding and appreciation of the environment's nexus with health, security, development, and other cross-sections with socioeconomic and political dimensions and the need for a transformative change.

## 5) Centrality of sustainable consumption and production to tackle three strategic pillars that underpin UNEP's vision for the period 2022-2025

**UNEP's vision is planetary sustainability for people, prosperity and equity.** Science provides clear evidence that the world is facing three major crises: climate change, pollution, and nature loss - driven by population pressure and unsustainable consumption and production patterns. Collective action is required on global environmental challenges to restore human relationships with the natural world and create planetary stability for all people. Failing to act will lead to dramatic, irreversible changes in the conditions of the Earth system, and subsequently, threaten humanity's very existence.

To address these challenges and support delivery of the 2030 Agenda the focus of UNEP's delivery in the four-year term of this Strategy will be centred around achieving UNEP's vision through action in three strategic pillars:

- **Climate Stability**
- **Living in Harmony with Nature**
- **A Pollution-Free Planet**

### Strategic Pillar 1 - Climate Stability

**Climate change is the defining issue of our time and the pathway to climate stability will depend on mitigation and adaptation.** Mitigating greenhouse gas emissions by making the existential shift the science tells us needs to be made, and helping Member States whose communities are most at risk of climate impacts are central to face this existential challenge.

**UNEP will help drive the necessary action to cut emissions and achieve the Paris Agreement.** A rapid shift away from our dependence on fossil fuels and replacing them with clean energy innovations; halting deforestation; restoring degraded forests and changing the way we farm; embracing the circular economy and resource efficiency; and overhauling our cities and transport sectors. These actions will help deliver on the primary objectives of the Paris Agreement, of "holding the increase in global average temperatures to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit



the temperature increase to 1.5°C” and “increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development”. UNEP’s contribution to climate stability will be guided by impact level indicators which feature in the SDGs, the Paris Agreement, and that cut across all of UNEP’s programmatic focus areas.<sup>35</sup>

**UNEP will support countries with both mitigation and adaptation strategies.** Over three-quarters of all global emissions are caused by the G20 countries. UNEP will therefore support countries with high emissions in their mitigation strategies and actions, while continuing to support developing countries, including Least Developed Countries and SIDS, for adaptation strategies and actions.

**A strategic change in climate action requires a shift in public and private sector investments.** To drive a transformation in climate action requires a change in global and national markets grounded in growing public support. UNEP will help accelerate the shift across the finance industry and a shift in public incentives to achieve a conducive investment environment where both public and private sector spending is supportive of the Paris Agreement and the SDGs.

**In working for climate stability, UNEP will work to achieve the following milestones for the period 2022-2025:**

- Fossil fuel subsidies and other climate-damaging incentives will be redirected towards sustainable energy sources, creating at least a level playing field for the clean energy transition;
- The energy transition will have accelerated to a pace that can significantly contribute to energy sector carbon neutrality by 2050 at the latest;
- The world will have harnessed climate benefits from resource and energy efficiency measures in resource and energy-intensive industries;
- The role of nature for climate change solutions will be fully harnessed and a “green gigaton” will have been mobilized; and
- Member States, with a focus on developing countries, increasingly invest to adapt to and protect their populations from unavoidable climate change.

## Strategic Pillar 2 – Living in Harmony with Nature

**Ecosystems, and the diversity of life within them, underpin the very health of the planet and in turn that of humankind.** This strategic pillar will advance the goal of “2050 Vision “Living in harmony with nature” adopted by Member State Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2010, where “By 2050, biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people.”<sup>36</sup> Dependency on ecosystems, including for food, water, medicines, climate regulation, and protection from extreme events, has been outlined clearly by the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, the Global Environmental Outlook, the International Resource Panel, and other assessments. In turn, ecosystem degradation jeopardizes progress towards the SDGs and human well-being.

**To achieve sustainability, countries must prioritize actions that value, conserve, restore, and safely use nature.** This will deliver benefits for current and future generations. Biodiversity must be anchored in pathways to sustainable development and integrated within other key areas.

**In a post pandemic world, strong partnerships on nature are central to build back better, create green jobs and eradicate poverty.** UNEP will focus on partnerships for transformational change,

<sup>35</sup> Indicators on human wellbeing, equity, societal stability and ecosystem functioning (to be established for UNEP’s 2050 vision)

<sup>36</sup> Adopted by the Parties to the Convention of Biological Diversity in 2010, [www.cbd.int/sp/elements/#1](http://www.cbd.int/sp/elements/#1)



strengthening regulatory frameworks, upscaling best practices. These will deliver ‘nature-positive’ solutions across sectors to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem integrity. Together, these actions will set the world on a pathway to ensuring poverty eradication, social resilience, green and decent job creation and an economic and trade system that works in harmony with nature. Living in harmony with nature will be integrated as a fundamental pillar of ‘building back better’ from the COVID-19 crisis, of preventing future pandemics and of preventing and mitigating the impacts from disasters and conflicts with an eye on the global environment.

**In working for a world that is living in harmony with nature, UNEP will work to achieve the following milestones for the period 2022-2025:**

- The post-2020 global biodiversity framework will be integrated into national planning, implementation, monitoring, and reporting processes;
- Biodiversity will be mainstreamed for sustainable development and integrated with other key areas and sectors, including food and agriculture, sustainable forest management and zero deforestation, health, infrastructure, trade, energy, finance, governance, and justice;
- The environmental foundation of sustainable agriculture will be strengthened through nature-positive practices;
- The degradation of ecosystems will be halted with significant action to restore nature and build the resilience of landscapes and seascapes, with ecosystems also leveraged as a tool for disaster risk reduction and greater social resilience; and
- Private financial flows will be shifted towards improving ecosystem management.

### Strategic Pillar 3 – A Pollution-Free Planet

**Eliminating pollution is central to improving human well-being and prosperity for all.** This strategic pillar will work towards the goal of a “pollution free Planet” and through its related ‘Implementation Plan’<sup>37</sup>. Planetary health encompasses the very building blocks of life: food, land, water and air. A pollution-free planet will improve the conditions for the poor and disadvantaged and enhance human well-being and prosperity. The Implementation Plan is designed to prevent, reduce, mitigate and eliminate pollution to restore and safeguard ecosystem integrity, thereby preserving our collective natural capital. This is the best insurance policy for humankind and future generations.

**Relevant multilateral and regional environmental agreements provide a framework for international governance and time-bound actions.** Challenges and gaps, however, limit the effectiveness of chemical and pollution action. These gaps center on availability of data and information; policy design and implementation; availability of sustainable infrastructure; institutional and technical capacity; business and industry leadership; and correct pricing that reflect the true value of ecosystems. Gaps also exist in consumer information on chemicals in products that can drive change in behaviors and public awareness, triggering, and empowering action on a larger scale. Addressing these gaps and challenges is central to the principles included in the Implementation Plan.

**More systemic shifts are required to transition towards a pollution-free planet.** UNEP will respond to country demands and capacity gaps to prevent, control and manage pollution and help transfer and share good practices, experiences, initiatives and green technologies within and across countries and local contexts – North-North, North-South and South-South and triangular cooperation. To scale this work, UNEP will leverage UN reforms and our global footprint.

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<sup>37</sup> Implementation Plan "Towards a Pollution-Free Planet" Adopted at UNEA 4 2019 through resolution 4/21

**As populations grow and more people escape poverty and aspire to a higher standard of living.** The linear economic model of “take-make-dispose” can no longer be maintained if we want to avert ever more waste and pollution on an already polluted planet. Instead, transitioning to a pollution-free planet needs innovation and targeted action, as well as a more pervasive longer-term shift in the economy. We must all be low carbon, circular and less toxic.

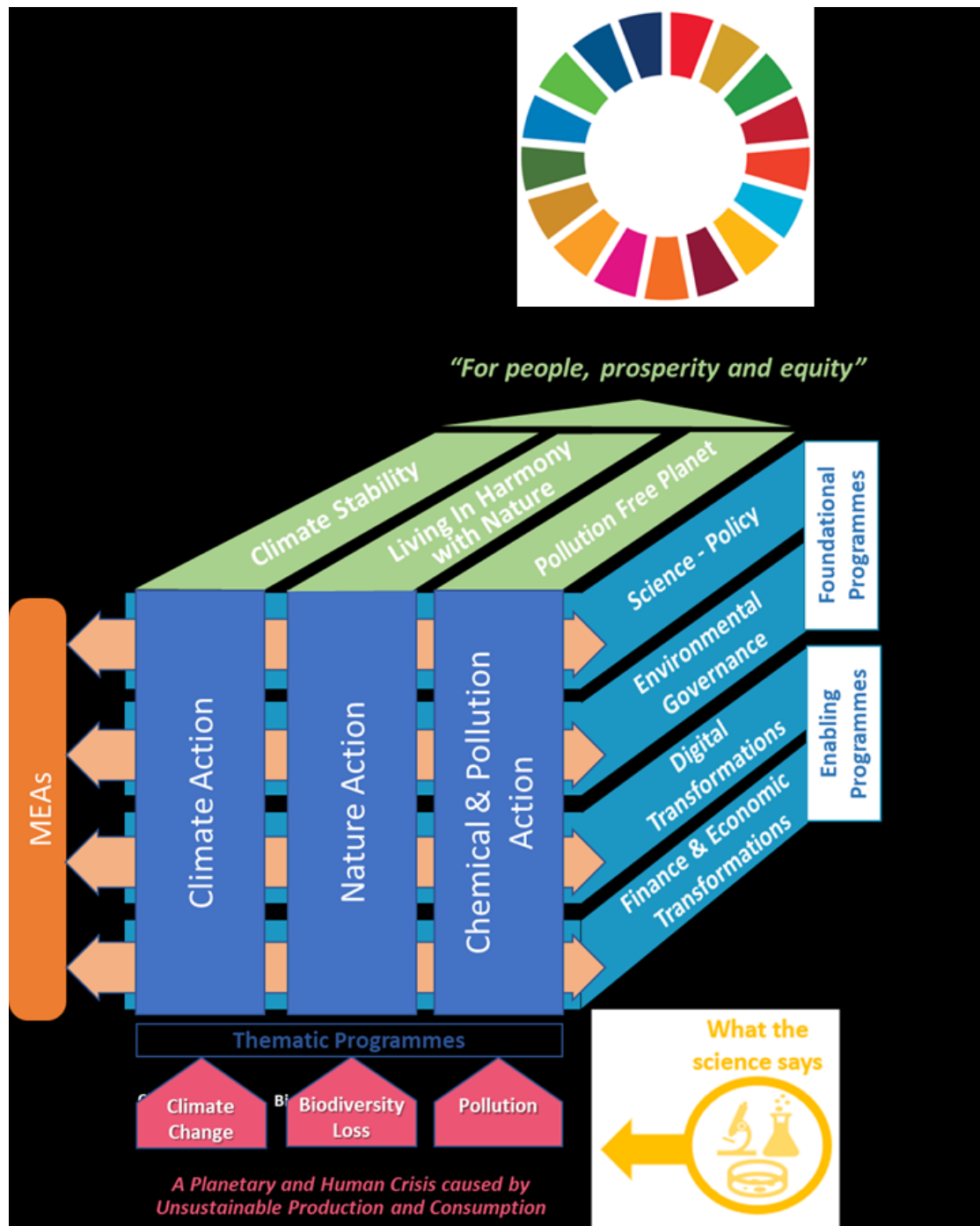
**In working for a pollution-free planet, UNEP will work to achieve the following milestones for the period 2022-2025:**

- Member States will be supported in achieving pollution-reduction related goals, SDG targets and other multilateral environmental goals and targets;
- Mechanisms to incentivize and redirect finance and investments to cleaner economic activities through internalizing the costs of pollution in financial decisions and the adoption of costs and disclosure frameworks will be in place;
- Circularity will be built across value chains, with a focus on high impact sectors and products, including food and agriculture systems, the extractives sector, transportation, and building and construction.
- Ecosystem-based approaches, nature-based solutions, and green and digital technologies to mitigate and manage pollution, including in response to disasters, conflicts and other emergencies will be adopted;
- Integrated policies and practices to tackle pollution, with a specific emphasis on city-level action and participatory action through citizen science approaches, will be in place;
- Responsible consumption choices will be aided by increased awareness and incentives; and
- Safe production processes and safeguards will benefit from fiscal support.

## 6) UNEP's Programmes

The focus of UNEP's work in the next four years to deliver on UNEP's vision, is organized into three thematic programmes, two foundational and two enabling programmes constituting a total of seven subprogrammes.

Figure 1: UNEP's Programmes for 2022-2025



## I) Thematic Programmes

### Climate Action

**UNEP will strengthen the established linkages and bridges between science and policy to catalyze action on mitigation and adaptation, and foster transparency to enable change.** This programme will be guided by a quest for the highest possible impact on climate mitigation and building resilience.<sup>38</sup> UNEP will focus on four interdependent strategic interventions supported by UNEP's two foundational and two enabling programmes. Sustainable production and consumption and a favorable public opinion will be promoted as critical market signals for climate action. UNEP will further stress and ensure synergies in delivering on multiple environmental and development objectives such as air quality and climate change<sup>39</sup>.

Across all interventions, UNEP will operate through networks and partnerships, such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the Climate Technology Center and Network, UN Country teams<sup>40</sup> as well as sister UN agencies, to build public support, governmental capacity, and investments in advancing the Paris Agreement and national development goals.

Through this thematic programme, UNEP will engage in the following strategic actions:

**1) Integrate the Best Climate Science into Policymaking:** Through IPCC, IRP, IPBES, and UNEP flagship reports, such as the Gap reports, UNEP will provide the world with strategic, up-to-date information at the global, national and sectoral and industry level, on the progress towards achieving carbon neutrality and resilience<sup>41</sup>.

In close collaboration with its science policy foundational programme, UNEP will:

- Produce up-to-date, state-of-the-art compilation of climate change metrics<sup>42</sup> and related policy advice and communicate these to the governments, the private sector, public and the UN system;
- Facilitate production/availability of regular, in-depth sectoral knowledge products that, at the global, regional and national level, will measure progress in achieving carbon neutrality and improving resilience and report on development, trade-in and adoption of technologies, and monitor climate finance trends; and
- Mobilize and galvanize policy and stakeholder networks globally, regionally, and nationally to inform and promote the provision and use of climate change information<sup>43</sup> in development planning and investment decisions.

**2) Drive Action for Decarbonization and Resilience:** UNEP and its networks<sup>44</sup> will work with both high emitting and vulnerable countries on their key sectors, which contribute most to GHG emissions and

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<sup>38</sup> Focus on countries, sectors, private sectors and individuals that can deliver the highest emission reductions and enhanced resilience. The targeted "audiences" will be determined in collaboration with UNEP's other proposed programmes to deliver not only for climate stability but also for a pollution-free planet and living in harmony with nature.

<sup>39</sup> The specific links across the thematic and enabling programmes will be identified and described in the next iteration on climate action in the next MTS.

<sup>40</sup> More details on partnerships and modus operandi will be added at a later stage but UNEP will build on existing partnerships and networks rather than creating new ones.

<sup>41</sup> These knowledge products are guided by the 1.5°C and 2°C temperature targets of the Paris Agreement, while the SDGs and the Sustaining Peace Agenda provide the overall framing for and provide a foundation for UNEP's all interventions.

<sup>42</sup> Interlinked programmatic delivery with Science enabling programme, includes the Emissions and Adaptation Gap Reports.

<sup>43</sup> E.g., IPCC, IRP, IPBES, Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency, CTCN, Global Adaptation Network, etc.

<sup>44</sup> UNEP supports several networks and partnerships across science (e.g., World Adaptation Science Programme), technology (Climate Technology Centre and Network), finance (Net-Zero Asset Owners Alliance), as well as all key sectors e.g., United for Efficiency, Cool

underpin national development strategies<sup>45</sup>, as well as the finance sector as a transversal part of countries' economies, to facilitate the transition to carbon neutrality and enhanced resilience<sup>46</sup>. UNEP's work will be directed at integrated development planning and resource allocation at national, sub-national, and sectoral level.

UNEP will:

- Facilitate partnerships, including private sector alliances, across key sectors (energy, industry, agriculture, forestry, transport, buildings, and finance as a transversal sector) to achieve mitigation and adaptation outcomes that to:
  - provide authoritative facilitation and guidance on the state of play and needed actions and bridge policy change with on-the-ground action and public discourse;
  - promote all available solutions ranging from technologies, energy and material efficiency, behavior change and consumer decision-making; and
  - support introduction and evidence-based evaluations of new technologies and climate solutions as well as their integration into sectoral and national policy.
- Support Member States achieving global and national goals on adaptation, develop capacities for climate change adaptation planning including improved information on climate change risks, cost-effective and scalable adaptation strategies, institutional capacity development and mainstreaming of adaptation into sectoral planning, policy regulatory systems. UNEP will promote the inclusion of human security as a key resilience aspect.
- Support Member States to interlink subnational and sectoral efforts into their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and Long-Term Strategies (LTS) through policy advice, technical assistance, and capacity building, and monitoring frameworks.

**3) Enhance Transparency and Accountability to meet reporting obligations.** UNEP, in collaboration with its networks and the GEF, will support countries, and the private sector, to report in line with UNFCCC commitments, and set transparency frameworks for the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Support will be offered to track and report the implementation of climate actions in a way that builds mutual trust and confidence in collective, national, and sub-national efforts to decarbonize and enhance resilience. The intervention will closely connect to UNEP's role as a know-how authority and underpin confidence in climate investments.

UNEP will engage in global, national, sub-national, and sectoral efforts to track progress on the Paris Agreement in a synergetic manner through:

- Providing support to GHG inventories, finance, investment and trade trends, etc.
- Providing support to the global stock take process and the establishment of transparency and monitoring frameworks at the national level and advance interconnection between the private sector, sub-national, national, and international frameworks.
- Supporting countries to report progress on their delivery on the Paris Agreement and global MEAs and national development plans.
- Enhancing the availability of data and lessons learned to inform positive policy signals aimed at incentivizing non-state actor investments in climate action.

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Coalition, Sustainable Rice Platform, UN-REDD Programme, Partnership for Clean Fuels, and Global Alliance on Buildings and Constructions. The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, led by UNEP and FAO, will be a key platform for advancing nature-based solutions to climate change. The full range of current and future partnerships will be described in the Programme of Work and in-depth strategies.

<sup>45</sup> This will be guided by human wellbeing and accelerated realization of socioeconomic priorities and Sustainable Development Goals

<sup>46</sup> It is envisioned that the sectoral effort will be delivered in synergy with UNEP's other thematic/enabling programmes on the overall objective of the organization.

## Chemical and Pollution Action

**Environmental quality, health and wellbeing, and their implications for equity, poverty, and vulnerability are powerful motivations to move to a pollution-free planet.** Addressing this nexus is at the core of Agenda 2030 and contributes directly to the achievement of all SDGs. It is also called for by many UNEA resolutions. The UN COVID-19 programmatic responses provide ways for accelerating action on environmental determinants of health, by partnering with others, and strengthening cross-sectoral collaboration, to act on the inter-linkages between environment and health.

This programme will focus on six interconnected actions and interventions along with those in other enablers and thematic programmes to achieve the sub-goals highlighted in the strategic pillars on pollution, climate change, and nature loss.

Through this thematic programme, UNEP will engage in the following strategic actions:

**1) Promote sound information and knowledge sharing:** UNEP will support the collection and sharing of up-to-date, credible, and relevant chemicals and pollution data and statistics, complemented by existing solutions, to support well-informed actions to address pollution and promote systemic shifts at all levels of governance and through society. UNEP will work with partners to support countries to adopt pollution release and transfer registers and link this data collection system with UNEP's World Environment Situation Room.

**2) Accelerate policy shifts towards the sound management of chemicals and waste:** UNEP will design science-based integrated policies and strengthen policy coherence, implementation and effectiveness -taking advantage of environmental data insights as enabled by digital technologies- to significantly reduce harmful effects caused by chemicals of major public health concern<sup>47</sup>; promote sound chemicals and waste management prevent and mitigate environmental and health threats through a One Health<sup>48</sup> approach.

**3) Enhance the capacity to act and strengthen institutions:** UNEP will leverage global, regional and industry platforms for sharing experiences, invest in strengthened institutional capacity, build pollution data sharing mechanisms, capacity building and technology transfer, and develop adequate policy, regulatory and cooperation frameworks for addressing transboundary pollution, disaster risk reduction policies, and practices and putting in place early warning systems.

**4) Scale ongoing efforts on greening waste and wastewater management infrastructure:** UNEP will support the Member States in developing resilient waste management systems – plastics, e-waste, and solid waste - and greener infrastructure, along with multilateral development banks, solid waste associations and the private sector. Adopt ecosystem-based approaches, nature-based solutions, and promote circularity, monitoring of key environmental indicators as well as green and digital technologies to identify, prevent, mitigate, and manage waste and wastewater related pollution.

**5) Raise ambition and leadership on sustainable and healthier living through advocacy, champions, and UNEP's convening power:** UNEP will engage with youth, academia, civil society, finance, and the private sector to garner support for positive environmental change, less pollution and sustainable, healthier living. UNEP, with partners, can reach millions through robust campaigns such as #BreatheLife, #CleanSeas, #BeatPollution, #TimeforNature, and the New Plastics Economy Global

<sup>47</sup> [https://www.who.int/ipcs/assessment/public\\_health/chemicals\\_phc/en/](https://www.who.int/ipcs/assessment/public_health/chemicals_phc/en/)

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/one-health>

Commitment, showing why it is smart and effective to take sustainable action. UNEP can build on in-house expertise and networks, such as the One Planet network and the Global Partnership on Marine Litter and work with other UN agencies and UNCTs to raise awareness on the impacts of pollution; seek industry involvement and engagement through providing reliable consumer information which drives change in behavior and pollution commitments. This also includes mainstreaming environment into humanitarian action to increase the technical quality, range and ambition of work accompanying humanitarian actors to help them address how the environment negatively affects the health of most vulnerable populations.

**6) Provide targeted advisory services at the nexus of pollution, health and the environment** UNEP will enhance collaboration among sectors on a range of chemicals, pollution and waste issues. These include monitoring of public health, chemicals, waste and environment data and the design of joined/aligned action; management of COVID-19 related medical waste and plastic waste in an environmentally sound manner; support the implementation of chemicals and waste-related multilateral environmental agreements and sustainable management of nutrients.

## Nature Action

Though this thematic programme UNEP will engage in the following strategic actions, giving high priority to interventions that value, conserve, restore and sustainably use nature, delivering benefits that are essential for all people:

1. **Promote sustainable approaches to natural resources management.** UNEP will promote transformations in food systems and including agriculture and fisheries, to reverse unsustainable land, water, and sea use change and degradation and to secure the environmental foundations of equitable food security. UNEP will continue to assist the Member States to strengthen the environmental basis of sustainable agriculture through nature-positive practices, such as agroecology. UNEP will also continue to provide support and guidance for increased knowledge on access and benefits and action for the sustainable use of our terrestrial, freshwater, and marine ecosystems' resources sustainably, including using indigenous and local knowledge.
2. **Strengthen biodiversity and health linkages to prevent and reduce risks for both human and ecosystem health.** UNEP will strengthen and promote the science approaches on the linkages between biodiversity, ecosystems and human health. In a post-pandemic situation this will include addressing nature degradation as a root cause of zoonotic diseases, and other novel biological introductions. UNEP will also work with partners to promote and strengthen the capacity of countries to implement the environmental dimensions of the "One Health" approach (linking human, animal and ecosystem health) focusing on biosecurity measures and support the implementation of the Global Plan of Action on Biodiversity and Health.
3. **Actively support the Member States on the implementation of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.** UNEP will work with partners to ensure the post-2020 global biodiversity framework is taken on board in national processes, including science-based approaches in the sustainable use of biological resources. This includes a coherent implementation of the post-2020 biodiversity framework with other MEAs. UNEP will also promote and reinforce ecosystem-based ocean governance based on the Regional Seas programmes.
4. **Promote increased political leadership and facilitate investments for the conservation, sustainable use, and restoration of nature.** UNEP will assist the Member States in conservation, sustainable use, and restoration efforts for the implementation of the post-2020 global

biodiversity framework, and to accelerate the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. UNEP will also support the conservation of existing habitats to halt irreparable damage including damage and loss from disasters, conflict, and climate change. For forest ecosystems, UNEP will work with partners and through networks on advancing and strengthening UN-REDD as a platform to halt forest loss and degradation. UNEP will provide tools and guidance to countries and share knowledge and information to value natural capital and prepare nationally relevant metrics for Inclusive Wealth.

5. **Develop and promote frameworks and norms for biodiversity and nature-positive financing and infrastructure.** Working with UNEP's enabling programme on Economic and Financial transformations UNEP will advocate for the integration of biodiversity and ecosystems services consideration and environmental and biodiversity risk into financial decision-making. Priority will be given to innovative funding mechanisms that support conservation and help local communities develop alternative livelihood opportunities that build sustainability and resilience while protecting their rights.

## II) Foundational Programmes

UNEP's two foundational programmes underpin all of UNEP's work in the other areas.

### Science-Policy

**UNEP will continue to be the leading facilitator of a dynamic science-policy interface at the global level that supports well-informed decision making on the environment leading to better environmental outcomes and enhanced human wellbeing for all.**

**All of UNEP's work will be guided by the latest scientific evidence.** UNEP will deploy this through a compelling and cutting-edge approach that speaks globally and inclusively beyond the environmental community. UNEP's science will seek to influence societal transformational changes and inform related policy and behavioural shifts that are pathways towards achieving UNEP's vision for the planet.

Through this foundational programme, UNEP will engage in the following strategic actions:

1. **UNEP will convene the global scientific communities to strengthen consensus for policymaking, identify solutions and guide coherent actions for environmental sustainability, including on emerging issues.** UNEP will continue to provide authoritative assessments of the state of the world's environment<sup>49</sup> based on the latest available knowledge. This will be done in partnership with expert networks, such as the Science and Technology Alliance for Sustainable Development and scientific bodies, including the IPCC and IPBES. UNEP will promote a coherent uptake of its authoritative science, working through a multi-stakeholder approach that will provide integrated options for policy and decision makers. These will include solutions on climate change mitigation and adaptation tools, measures to prevent and reduce pollutions and methods to maintain and restore degraded sustainable natural systems. As part of the foresight process, UNEP will also continue to bring emerging, cross-cutting environmental issues to the attention of governments and the international community, thereby contributing to closing the gap between scientific relevance and policy action.

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<sup>49</sup> Including but not limited to: The Global Environment Outlook (GEO), the Frontiers Report, the Emissions Gap Report, the Adaptation Gap Report, the Global Chemicals Outlook, the Global Waste Management Outlook.



2. **UNEP will ensure that policymaking and stakeholder action towards the achievement of the SDGs is guided environmental data that integrates all three dimensions of sustainable development.** UNEP's approach for delivering the transformational shifts called by this Strategy will be driven by sound environmental data that integrates social and economic considerations. UNEP will use data as a strategic asset for driving decisions and actions across the broad spectrum of the policy making cycle, and for embedding the environmental agenda into political discussions on economic and social issues. UNEP's World Environment Situation Room (WESR) will measuring the effectiveness, relevance and impact of global environmental policies UNEP will continue to support evidence-based country capacities to measure and track progress on SDG implementation and sharing environmental information through enhanced national data collection system and reporting systems. UNEP's country support will capitalize on common digital infrastructures, open datasets and derived analysis that are interoperable and available through application programming interfaces (APIs) and web services, including the WESR. UNEP's approach to data will benefit from increased cooperation with the UN System, including the Statistical Commission and the Regional Commissions, as well as the MEA Secretariats, for more coherence in tracking and measuring the SDGs. More harmonized data will facilitate better comparability for decision making.
  
3. **UNEP will promote an inclusive science-policy interface that speaks to all.** An effective science-policy interface that is capable of catalyzing transformative policies and decisions must be supported by inclusive environmental advocacy efforts. UNEP recognizes that stakeholder engagement is a critical step to enhance societal understanding and acceptance of scientific findings. Through its various fora, UNEP will serve as a knowledge broker to build consensus and enabling action across a wide group of stakeholders, including but not limited to academics and councils from the scientific community to political and advocacy groups, the business, technology and private sector community. UNEP will also improve the accessibility of its scientific work and use improved communications means to engage society towards influencing and stimulating changes at the scale and in the timeframes necessary to achieve the aspirations of Agenda 2030.

## Environmental Governance

**Policy coherence and effective laws and institutions are foundational to address climate change, pollution and nature loss and achieve the environmental dimension of sustainable development.** Environmental governance provides the enabling framework and institutional and legal architecture needed to make environmental policy goals a reality.

On this basis, through this foundational programme UNEP will engage in the following strategic actions:

1. **UNEP will support countries to strengthen laws and institutions at all levels to achieve environmental goals in the context of sustainable development.** In 2019, the fourth session of the UNEA adopted the Fifth Montevideo Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law (Montevideo Programme V). The Montevideo Programme V is a ten-year intergovernmental programme designed to guide the identification and implementation of priority actions in the field of environmental law to be undertaken by UNEP in collaboration with other actors. UNEP will implement the Montevideo Programme V to support the development and implementation of environmental rule of law, build related capacities, and contribute to the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. UNEP's support will include results-oriented and country-driven strategic activities to promote public participation, access to information, and access to justice in environmental matters. It will also include enhanced and sustainable capacity-building support for key environmental law stakeholders,

including judges, prosecutors, and other enforcement officers. UNEP will work primarily with institutions and not individuals in delivering this support. UNEP will also produce concrete guidance products including global assessments, and track and advance shared understanding and facilitate action on key emerging environmental law issues.

2. **UNEP will lead the UN system and support national governments in the development and implementation of environmental rule of law.** As outlined in UNEP's First Global Report on Environmental Rule of Law published in 2019, environmental laws and institutions have grown dramatically in number over the last three decades. Almost 90% of all countries now have framework environmental laws, and 85% of countries have created cabinet-level bodies responsible for environmental protection. Despite this remarkable progress, implementation and enforcement of environmental law remain a central challenge for all countries. Environmental rule of law provides the framework to meet this challenge. Under the Montevideo Programme V, and following its mandate under UNEP Governing Council decision 27/9, UNEP will support national governments in the development and implementation of environmental rule law. This support will include the promotion of information and data exchange, education, capacity-building, and technical assistance, all to strengthen effective national environmental governance systems and improve the effectiveness of rule of law systems. As part of this support, UNEP will also conduct biennial and data-informed global assessments of environmental rule of law, to be published in 2021, 2023, and 2025. The reports will track and report on core elements of environmental rule of law, including laws and institutions, civic engagement, rights, and justice.
3. **UNEP will promote policy coherence and integrated approaches for sustainable development.** UNEP will strengthen the transformational role of UNEA in environmental governance to support the achievement of internationally agreed environmental goals and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in a post COVID-19 world. It will promote policy coherence, international agreements, and cooperation on issues of regional and global significance by supporting relevant intergovernmental processes and regional and national institutions. UNEP will also contribute to promoting coherence and strengthening the environmental dimension of key economic policy decisions and processes such as the World Bank, IMF, and WTO. UNEP's Regional Offices will play a key role in supporting countries in finding integrated approaches to implementing the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda. Working closely with the MEAs and the UN Environment Management Group, UNEP will strengthen the environmental governance nexus between nature, pollution, climate change, and sustainable consumption and production.
4. **UNEP will strengthen environmental rights:** A safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment is integral to the full enjoyment of a wide range of human rights, including the rights to life, health, food, water, and sanitation. Without a healthy environment, we are unable to fulfill the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development or even live at a level commensurate with minimum standards of human dignity. In partnership with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and other actors, UNEP will support the UN system and countries to enhance the promotion, protection, and respect for environmental rights. This work will include monitoring threats against environmental rights defenders; advocate for better protection; urge more effective accountability for perpetrators of violence and intimidation; develop networks of environmental human rights defenders and promote meaningful and informed participation by rights defenders and civil society in environmental decision-making.

### III) Enabling Programmes

UNEP's two enabling programmes aim to both enable and accelerate achievements in UNEP's other programmes.

## Finance and Economic Transformations

**Reducing impacts on climate change, nature loss, and pollution, requires inclusive and sustainable economic transformations, repurposing finance, and through more efficient and responsible consumption and production patterns.** UNEP's work over the years through the International Resource Panel, the Partnership for Action on Green Economy, the One Planet Network, the Extractives Hub and the UNEP Finance Initiative, shows that there are now important opportunities to decarbonize, manage resources more responsibly, and maintain resource value through circular approaches, while addressing sustainability, equity, employment, economic growth, security, and health objectives. With more innovative forms of management, collaboration, and community building becoming available with digital technologies and connectivity, new ways to enable natural resources to support green and inclusive rural and urban transformations are being tested and piloted. Reframing national development and economic planning, and re-directing finance, investment, and trade are means to take these initiatives rapidly to scale.

Through this enabling programme, UNEP will engage in the following strategic actions:

- 1. Reframing national development and aligning finance with sustainability.** Countries need support to enable a re-shaping of business models, production practices, and consumer choices, alongside re-directing, mobilizing, and scaling-up finance and capital allocation for environmentally sustainable ventures. Building on solid foundations, UNEP, together with its partners, will support an enabling macro-economic environment and help align banking, insurance, and investment to accelerate the necessary sustainable economic transformation through its various normative initiatives such as Principles of Responsible Banking, and Positive Impact finance. UNEP will continue to support countries to design and implement effective policy, regulatory, and enabling frameworks that reduce impacts and pollution through more resource-efficient and cleaner economic activities. Building on partnerships with public and private financial and industrial actors, the engagement will promote access to green and digital finance that is gender-responsive, including for micro, small, and medium enterprises.
- 2. Support initiatives for more responsible and resource-efficient industry:** UNEP will work to raise the bar on industry standards across resource-intensive sectors -- extractives, agriculture, buildings and construction, and infrastructure – to align with the 2030 Agenda. Activities will include support for subsidy reduction and price reform for sustainability; promoting resource and energy efficiency; support for a just transition to low carbon energy technologies; and identifying policies and investments to create new jobs through reskilling. Partnerships with industry and the finance sector will be a key element, with strong support for small and medium-sized enterprises. The digital ecosystem will be harnessed to maximize the sustainability gains from the transformation and monitor its impacts, guided by data analytics based on science-based and life cycle approaches.
- 3. UNEP will promote policies for accelerating sustainable consumption and production through circular approaches and business models.** UNEP and networks will promote and support countries to accelerate their transition to more circular value chains, from the design of products and the circularity of material flows to creating the right incentives and legal structures to stimulate circular economy business ideas. It will do this also by using enabling tools of the One Planet Network like sustainable public procurement, sustainable lifestyles and education, and consumer information to shift consumption choices enabling market transformations and more

sustainable trade. These approaches can be adjusted to consider small and vulnerable suppliers and markets, considering global, regional, national, and local contexts.

4. **UNEP and partners will support the greening of cities and creating more circular and clean economies in urban and peri-urban areas.** The findings from the International Resource Panel such as the Weight of Cities report or on green technologies will be deployed in a systems approach aimed at transforming financial, industrial, and infrastructure systems. UNEP will provide support on more sustainable and resilient value chains, in the food, mobility, and energy sectors, and the built environment. This will build on the GEF-7 Sustainable Cities Programme, with an integrated approach and emphasis given to circularity, nature-based solutions through integrated planning and design, and greening cities to ensure enhanced quality of life.
5. **UNEP will catalyze investment for a green rural transformation.** In the context of COVID-19, with many migrants returning to the rural homes, ensuring ecosystem resilience and job opportunities to absorb the returnees and reduce push migration will be critical. UNEP will work with its partners in government and industry towards the creation of green and resource-based employment; restoration of degraded ecosystems for new job opportunities, biodiversity enhancement, and climate adaptation; support the transition to sustainable agriculture systems. Cooperative, multi-stakeholder partnerships and other institutions specializing in sustainable rural economies and digital transformations will be engaged.

## Digital Transformations

**UNEP will work to be a global catalyst for digital environmental cooperation, by co-curating a network of change agents and partnerships, making full use of digital technology and related innovations for collaboration as well as accelerated and amplified impact.**

**UNEP will continue its efforts towards digital transformation in line with the Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation.** UNEP will also align its digital transformation strategy with the Secretary-General's Data Strategy and the System-wide Roadmap for Innovating UN Data and Statistics. UNEP will advise the UN System to adopt an environmentally sound, energy-efficient, and low-carbon technology infrastructure. UNEP will use digital entry points and digital ecosystems as a strategic opportunity to embed relevant environment and climate data and analytics into the work of the UN System.

Through this enabling programme, UNEP will engage in the following strategic actions:

1. **Catalyzing a digital ecosystem for people and planet that can generate real-time insights on the environment and health of our planet at any scale.** UNEP will work with Member States, private sector entities, and non-governmental organizations to promote collecting, sharing, and using environmental data and insights as digital public goods to achieve environmental sustainability and resilience. UNEP will contribute expertise to the digital architecture needed for a digital ecosystem for people and planet including through open data and algorithm standards, interoperability and licensing standards, and data quality assurance. This track will be underpinned by a new Global Data Strategy<sup>50</sup> with the World Environment Situation Room as a global example of open data and algorithms which capture key environmental datasets and indicators.

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<sup>50</sup> -The Ministerial Declaration of UNEA 4 states "We will work towards comparable international environmental data, and we support the United Nations Environment Programme in developing a global environmental data strategy by 2025 in cooperation with other relevant United Nations bodies."

2. **Establishing partnerships for digital transformation that can use environmental insights and digital technologies to support and accelerate the implementation of UNEP's Programme Work.** UNEP's digital transformation partnerships will use concrete use cases to demonstrate how data and digital technologies enable environmental solutions that are better, faster, cheaper, easier and more resilient compared to business as usual. UNEP will identify how they can amplify the reach, scale, and impact of its work. One focus area will be to integrate environmental data and insights into the national-level analysis, for instance on the measurement of natural capital and the management of natural inputs into the economy, to inform policy-making processes, set priorities, and monitor real-time impact and effectiveness. Key entry points will include Voluntary National Reviews, UN Common Country Analysis, and the national processes of different multilateral environmental agreements. Other focus areas include enabling digital transformations at sectoral levels, such as data-driven real-time environmental risk profiling and environmental standard enforcement, that could internalize natural capital costs at all stages of social and economic activities. This can provide economic empowerment for the most vulnerable groups.
3. **Working with partners to build a governance framework for environmental digital public goods, including business models, incentives, and safeguards for public-private partnerships.** This will explore using digital technologies as a tool for environmental consensus building, digital democracy, and global environmental governance. One of the key focus areas will be to promote equity and inclusion of diverse perspectives, including from women, the Global South, indigenous groups, and social entrepreneurs. It will also involve establishing guidance to help mitigate the environmental impacts of the technology sector itself. UNEP's Science-Policy-Business Forum will provide an important platform to enhance this governance conversation among different constituencies.
4. **Transforming UNEP into a fully data-driven and digital organization, where data will be treated as a strategic asset that can drive insights, innovations, impact, and integrity – to better deliver on its mandate.** As UNEP strives to generate more value from data and digital technologies, it will build new internal capabilities to use data and insights as part of project design, implementation, communication, and evaluating impact. UNEP will expand environmental data and analytics capabilities and training across the organization. UNEP will unify the management of its data, ensuring everyone can discover, access, integrate, and share the data as required. At the same time, UNEP will adopt a range of digital technologies to modernize and transform the way it conducts business with its stakeholders and administers projects.

## 7) UN Reform - Delivering as One

**UN Reform presents an opportunity for UNEP to deliver its mandate more effectively and with significantly wider reach** and to promote the environmental dimension of sustainable development across the UN to achieve the 2030 Agenda. UNEP will work to address environmental risks and identify opportunities across all aspects of the UN's mission including peace and security, humanitarian operations and human rights.

As UNEP aligns with UN Reform guidelines and processes, UNEP will raise the profile of the environment through the UN System at the country, regional and global levels through:

1. **Enhanced participation in UN Country Teams (UNCT) and engagement with UN Resident Coordinators (RCs).** UNEP will ensure that science informs policy as it contributes to the work of UN Country Teams (UNCTs) and Resident Coordinators (RCs): in particular the design and implementation processes of Common Country Analyses (CCAs) and wider UN Sustainable

Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs). UNEP will support countries to ensure due consideration of environmental matters in their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) leading up to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in a feedback loop between country-level and global environmental priorities. UNEP will use the World Environment Situation Room to provide best-in-class environmental data and analytics to the Common Country Assessment process as well as to the broader UN data ecosystem and planned data cube.

2. **Participation in regional platforms and processes such as the Regional UN Sustainable Development Groups, the Regional Collaboration Platforms (RCPs) and Opportunity/Issue-Based Coalitions, Regional Knowledge Platforms.** UNEP will strengthen its participation in these platforms while leading environment-related opportunity/issue-based coalitions. UNEP will provide strategic support to preparations of regional platforms such as the regional ministerial environmental fora, inter-ministerial for a joint ministers' meetings, and the regional sustainable development fora. Decisions from these fora will inform UNEP programme planning and implementation and linkages between the environmental ministerial forums and both the UNEA and the Regional Sustainable Development Forums will be strengthened.
3. **Contribution to global fora and processes** such as the Environment Management Group (EMG); the General Assembly; the Economic and Social Commissions; the UN Sustainable Development Group; the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review; and the High-level Political Forum. UNEP will align its processes and procedures to the guidelines and requirements of the UN Reform. UNEP will build the capacity of staff to identify opportunities, apply adaptive management methods to implement UN Reform. UNEP will influence global environmental policy by disseminating evidence-based environmental information and raise public awareness on critical and emerging environmental issues.
4. **Leveraging the UN's global footprint and through partnerships** with sister agencies, UNEP will actively pursue opportunities to expand its global reach efficiently and effectively. In the spirit of delivering as one, UNEP will bring its value add of normative and technical support to hard-to-reach contexts, including complex disaster- and conflict-affected states and regions, supporting UN peacekeeping, peacebuilding, humanitarian and political missions when dedicated support on environmental dimensions to a crisis is required.

## 8) A Transformed UNEP - Delivering High Performance

**In 2019, UNEP launched a Transformation process to become more results-focused and effective in delivering the UNEP mandate.** Delivery of the Transformation activities has resulted in a major shift in UNEP's organizational capabilities and identity to deliver more impactful results, relevant to its purpose.

**The Transformation – from diagnosis to implementation – was underpinned by the principles of transparency, consultation, and inclusion.** Member States, MEAs, Major Groups, and Stakeholders, and the Private Sector, as well as Faith-Based Organizations, have helped shape the approach by sharing their views through surveys, focus groups, discovery workshops, interviews, and other forms of participation. This inclusive approach will continue as the organization moves to consolidate and benefit from these changes. Mastering change must now become second nature to UNEP leaders and staff, which will require both transformation capability and organizational agility, through the initiatives below.



**Collaborative Leadership will strengthen delivery.** UNEP will continue to build a healthy, results and performance-driven organization by addressing the mind-sets of all staff to help drive new forms of behaviour, building collaborative teams of staff at all levels, and developing a strategic leadership focusing resources on the right priorities. A leadership that is nimble, flexible and will work to ensure that new tools and practices are available to make the new habits stick.

**Getting gender right – gender a primary focus.** Gender equality and women’s empowerment is crucial not only because it is the right thing to do from a human’s rights and participatory perspective, but also because UNEP cannot ‘leave behind’ half the world’s population. UNEP also recognizes the disproportionate impact that environmental degradation may have on vulnerable groups, and people impacted by disasters and conflicts. Getting gender right will demand some fundamental shifts. Ensuring that UNEP data is genuinely gender differentiated; enhancing staff abilities to interpret what the gender differentiated data would imply in terms of policy recommendations; operationalizing gender dimensions and non-discrimination issues in programme and project design; creating gender informed learning loops, etc. In this respect, UNEP will work to further build staff capacity to better understand and analyze human rights, intersectional gender, and non-discrimination issues, and integrate related objectives in analytical and operational work.

**Strong continued management emphasis on quality, accountability, internal controls and compliance will underpin high performance.** UNEP will review and update its standards for internal controls and management, providing oversight, identifying opportunities for greater efficiency, and ensuring compliance with UN Regulations and Rules. Guided by UN Management Reforms and sound managerial practices of public sector institutions, several strategic managerial initiatives will be implemented that support UNEP’s transformation processes on strategy, culture, results, operational excellence, and leadership. Programmatic priorities will be underpinned by sound management and leadership practices, including governance of resources and programmes; knowledge and capacity building of staff; behavioral shifts that demonstrate and support solution orientation approaches; and the development of management tools that support decision making. This includes Enterprise Risk Management and a reinforced accountability framework that clarifies roles and responsibilities that will support effective implementation of the MTS.

**UNEP will increase the use of impact metrics with project performance dashboards and cross-project leaderboards to compare performance and impact.** The concept of “product-market” fit will be applied to assess the level of uptake of our products and services. Projects that cannot demonstrate an impact in key metrics after a prescribed period and a series of iterations will be closed. UNEP will seek to monitor and report on key digital metrics including social media (e.g., engagement, reach, referral and conversion rates), platform performance (e.g., unique users, new and returning users, session pages and duration, downloads and API calls) and uptake (e.g., references, use of data, media coverage). UNEP will use these metrics to establish real-time feedback loops to adapt projects responsively.

**UNEP will adopt a “learning by doing” approach and will seek to share insights and knowledge across the organization on successful digital transformation strategies so that our collective capacity to use digital tools can be improved.** UNEP will improve its internal data management and the use of artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies to challenge the conventional way of thinking, anticipating needs and identifying opportunities to innovate and modernize.

**Adapting to new ways of working, requires acquiring new skills, particularly in the context of the new digital world.** Investing in efforts to make the workforce more agile and resilient to changes in the environment will boost the organizational capacity and ability to respond and thrive in changing times.

**UNEP will invest in its human resources and build capacity through customized and in-house training and establish technical job groups networks across UNEP's areas of work.** UNEP will ensure that internal processes evolve to support the needs of our programmes and develop "best in class" fiduciary and governance standards that build on enterprise risk management tools. Opportunities will be identified to inculcate lessons learned from audits, evaluation, and reports of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) and in so doing will steer the organization on a path of strengthened operational efficiency and agility. UNEP will invest in "management by results" using real-time data to inform management decisions that are facilitated by business intelligence tools and dashboards.