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**International environmental policy and
governance issues**

**Progress in the implementation of resolution 4/2 on promoting
sustainable practices and innovative solutions for curbing food
loss and waste**

Report of the Executive Director

Introduction

1. In its resolution 4/2 on promoting sustainable practices and innovative solutions for curbing food loss and waste, the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) requested the Executive Director of UNEP to provide technical support to Member States in implementing the resolution; to foster regional and global cooperation and facilitate the exchange of experience and knowledge, research and best practice between Member States and other food-system stakeholders; to continue to participate in international initiatives to support transfer of innovative solutions and practices that can curb food loss and waste; to promote food loss and waste reduction and support countries, especially developing countries, upon their request, in exploring opportunities to collaborate with United Nations organizations and international financial institutions in line with their existing mandates and budgets; and to report to the United Nations Environment Assembly at its fifth session on progress made in implementing the relevant provisions of the resolution.

2. The present report describes the actions taken by the Executive Director to address the requests in resolution 4/2 and the lessons learned to date. Since the next substantive discussion on this resolution will take place at the resumed fifth session of the Environment Assembly, the recommendations for relevant action by the Assembly will be made via an amendment in order to reflect the outcomes of the United Nations Food Systems Summit scheduled for late 2021.

* In accordance with the decisions taken at the meeting of the Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly held on 8 October 2020 and at the joint meeting of the Bureaux of the United Nations Environment Assembly and the Committee of Permanent Representatives held on 1 December 2020, the fifth session of the Assembly is expected to adjourn on 23 February 2021 and resume as an in-person meeting in February 2022.

** UNEP/EA.5/1/Rev.1.

I. Progress in the implementation of resolution 4/2

3. Pursuant to resolution 4/2, UNEP has catalysed and implemented a range of actions, the highlights of which are described in the following paragraphs. The present report describes activities contributing to expected accomplishments 2b, 3b and 6a of the UNEP programme of work for the biennium 2020–2021. The work described in this report also complements UNEP work on food waste measurement under output 2 of project document 617.1, “Transitioning to sustainable food systems for better lifestyles and food security and nutrition”. Resources for the implementation of resolution 4/2 have included a dedicated food waste expert, allocation of \$108,771 from the Environment Fund and close to \$900,000 mobilized from Germany, Norway, Switzerland and the One Planet Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Sustainable Development Goal 12.

A. Technical support to Member States

4. As custodian of Sustainable Development Goal indicator 12.3.1(b), the Food Waste Index, UNEP published a food waste measurement methodology document to enable Member States to establish mechanisms for measuring and reporting data in a coherent and comparable way. The Food Waste Index methodology was approved as a Tier II Sustainable Development Goal indicator.¹ It was developed in close cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), co-custodian of the Sustainable Development Goal target 12.3 indicators. UNEP is also using modelling to develop new global food waste estimates, which it will release in the first quarter of 2021. Finally, UNEP established regional working groups on food waste measurement in the Asia and the Pacific, Western Asia, Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean regions to familiarize Member States with measurement methodologies and provide technical support in baseline setting and reporting on Sustainable Development Goal target 12.3. These activities correspond to the UNEP output indicator “Number of methodologies for the measurement of food waste element of 12.3.1 developed, agreed and implemented by countries” in project document 617.1, “Transitioning to sustainable food systems for better lifestyles and food security and nutrition”.

5. Supporting the development of food waste prevention strategies, policies, education and awareness-raising, UNEP has co-authored, sponsored or contributed to targeted publications, including, with FAO, *State of Food and Agriculture 2019: Moving Forward on Food Loss and Waste Reduction*; with the World Resources Institute, *Reducing Food Loss and Waste: Setting a Global Action Agenda* and *Reducing Food Loss and Waste: Ten Interventions to Scale Impact*; with the World Wide Fund for Nature, “Enhancing NDCs for Food Systems: Recommendations for Decision-makers”; with the Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy, *Circular Economy Action Agenda for Food*; and with Champions 12.3, *Call to Global Action on Food Loss and Waste*.

6. UNEP is supporting individual Member States at the subnational level in developing food waste baselines and strategies, including in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) and West Java (Indonesia), with five additional cities to be added as part of a new green technology and food waste project. Through a newly developed project, UNEP will provide measurement support to six countries (Ghana, India, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Senegal and Uganda) for a cluster of circular economy indicators for which UNEP is custodian. UNEP is also developing four regional working groups on food waste measurement and providing technical guidance on measurement methodologies, while enabling South-South collaboration in sharing good practices within and across regions.

7. With regard to sustainable cooling and cold chains, the UNEP Ozone secretariat supported the adoption of the Rome Declaration on the Contribution of the Montreal Protocol to Food Loss Reduction through Sustainable Cold Chain Development at the Thirty-first Meeting of Parties to the Montreal Protocol in November 2019 and serves as its custodian. Together with the Global Food Cold Chain Council, UNEP is piloting a new database model to map cold-chain capacity and needs at the country level. The International Institute of Refrigeration and UNEP have published a set of Cold Chain Technology Briefs, in multiple languages, covering technologies, refrigerant options, trends, prospects and challenges in the key subsectors of food production and processing; cold storage and refrigerated warehouses; transport refrigeration; commercial, professional and domestic refrigeration; and fishing vessel applications. The Kigali Cooling Efficiency Programme (K-CEP)² and the Carbon

¹ A Tier II indicator is defined as one that “is conceptually clear, has an internationally established methodology and standards are available, but data are not regularly produced by countries”.

² K-CEP is a philanthropic programme that supports the implementation of the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

Trust,³ in collaboration with the UNEP-led Cool Coalition,⁴ have published a new brief on “Net zero cold chains for food”. Furthermore, in late 2020 the Cool Coalition is launching an integrated rural cold chain programme in the State of Tamil Nadu in India that is aimed at using rural cold chain development with a focus on circularity, equity and renewables to anchor increased action on multiple, cross-cutting Sustainable Development Goals in some of India’s poorest rural districts.

B. Regional and global cooperation

8. Facilitating the exchange of experiences, knowledge, research and best practices among Member States and stakeholders, UNEP has co-hosted or supported three regional capacity-building workshops on food loss and waste reduction, in Bogota, Riyadh and Tokyo (the latter online), in collaboration with the Meeting of Agricultural Chief Scientists of G20 States (MACS-G20) Collaborative Initiative on Food Losses and Food Waste, the Thünen Institute and FAO. In this collaborative effort, UNEP led the working sessions on food waste measurement and national strategy development.

9. Supporting the transfer of innovative solutions and practices to curb food loss and waste, UNEP has contributed to the launch of a new African Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Cooling and Cold-Chain, based in Rwanda, which aims to increase the efficiency of farmers’ access to markets. Rwanda’s Cooling Initiative (RCOOL), supported by UNEP through its United for Efficiency (U4E) programme, provides the foundation for the new centre. The steering committee of the Cool Coalition has recommended the development of a new global cold chain working group, to be led by the University of Birmingham together with ONE\THIRD, a food waste think tank based in Denmark.

10. UNEP continues to participate in international initiatives to foster international cooperation, facilitate exchange of experiences, knowledge, research and best practices and support the transfer of innovative solutions and practices. Thus, UNEP is a founding member of the high-level food loss and waste coalition Champions 12.3, a member of the advisory board of ONE\THIRD and a member of the European Union Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste and its measurement subgroup.

11. UNEP co-convened the first International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste with FAO on 29 September 2020, co-hosting a high-level multi-stakeholder online event. UNEP led a “Kitchen Memories” social media campaign to mark the event and, together with the Edible Schoolyard Project, developed lesson plans to engage schoolchildren in food waste reduction through experiential learning and storytelling. UNEP also announced the appointment of a new Goodwill Ambassador, food systems activist and chef Massimo Bottura, who will support awareness-raising in the run-up to the Food Systems Summit and beyond.

12. Advocacy and outreach in relation to sustainable cooling and cold chains included the Cold Chain 4 Life campaign developed by UNEP and key partners for World Refrigeration Day, including a celebration kit and a high-level webinar, as well as the webinar “Enhancing Food Security and Poverty Reduction through Net-Zero Food Cold Chains” as part of the “This Is Cool”⁵ webinar series, and several stories relating to the cold chain and food loss and waste published on the websites of UNEP and its partners.⁶

13. UNEP is playing an active role in the preparatory work for the Food Systems Summit at various levels. The UNEP Executive Director acts as Chair of the Summit’s United Nations Task Force and through this takes part in the Summit’s Advisory Committee; UNEP is engaged in several of the Summit’s Action Tracks and cross-cutting thematic areas; and it provides direct support to the Summit secretariat. Through its engagement in action track 2 (Shift to sustainable consumption patterns), UNEP contributes to expanding the scope of the action track beyond nutritional aspects of consumption, notably to include actions relating to food loss and waste that build on the

³ A non-governmental organization helping businesses, governments and organizations around the world reduce carbon emissions and achieve greater resource efficiency.

⁴ The Cool Coalition is a global multi-stakeholder network that connects a wide range of key actors to facilitate knowledge exchange, advocacy and joint action towards a rapid global transition to efficient and climate-friendly cooling.

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EOeLPhRnJmg>.

⁶ <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/thirty-years-what-montreal-protocol-doing-protect-ozone>; <https://sdg.iisd.org/commentary/guest-articles/keeping-rural-harvests-cool-india-pilots-solution-to-food-loss-and-waste/>; <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/why-its-important-celebrate-world-refrigeration-day>; <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/centre-excellence-rwanda-aims-support-african-farmers-and-rural>.

“Target-Measure-Act” approach, as well as promotion of urban and peri-urban farming as a means of shifting consumption patterns and creating local jobs in short supply chains.

II. Lessons learned

14. The work described in this report has resulted in a number of lessons learned that have implications for the implementation of the resolution. First, experiences at the level of both Governments and the private sector demonstrate that the Target-Measure-Act approach to food loss and waste reduction works. Measurement has proven to be a critical first step, enabling countries to understand the scale of the problem, target hotspots and track progress towards 2030, and allowing baselines to be set and concrete actions defined.

15. Second, policies, where complemented by public-private partnerships and comprehensive consumer education campaigns, are effective in driving supply chain collaboration and the behavioural shifts needed to achieve Sustainable Development Goal target 12.3. Most countries and companies still lack a baseline and national strategy on food loss and waste, despite the fact that food loss and waste generate 8 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions, presenting a significant opportunity for climate change mitigation and adaptation. Currently, only 11 countries have included food loss in their nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and none have yet included food waste. The publication by the World Wide Fund for Nature and UNEP on “Enhancing NDCs for Food Systems: Recommendations for Decision-makers” extracted recommended actions from good practices that can help countries take advantage of this opportunity to align food loss and waste and climate strategies.

16. Measurements have shown that household food waste is one of the largest fractions of food loss and waste, and new UNEP estimates point to an underestimation of the size of the problem in developing countries.

17. The coronavirus disease pandemic has brought to the fore additional lessons that shed light on the fragility of complex value chains and in particular the impact on the food value chain. Efforts are under way across all regions to improve the resilience of supply chains, including by promoting urban and peri-urban farming as a way to create local jobs, harnessing circularity opportunities and fostering new social practices and relationships that reinforce food waste prevention behaviours while optimizing food material flows and recycling. Similarly, the pandemic has demonstrated that rapid behavioural shifts are possible, particularly thanks to better food management by individuals at home and an increase in the distribution of food to those in need through food banks. First studies indicate that food waste fell as a result of these behavioural changes⁷ after an early hike in food waste due to panic-induced stockpiling and the temporary closure of businesses in the hospitality sector because of lockdowns.

III. Recommendation and suggested action

18. The Environment Assembly may wish to take note of the present report and provide further guidance as appropriate.

⁷ <https://wrap.org.uk/content/food-waste-and-covid-19-survey-3-life-flux>.