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**International environmental policy and  
governance issues**

**Progress in the implementation of resolution 4/17 on promoting  
gender equality and the human rights and empowerment of  
women and girls in environmental governance**

**Report of the Executive Director**

**Introduction**

1. In its resolution 4/17, the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) requested the Executive Director of UNEP to report to the Environment Assembly at its fifth session on the implementation of the UNEP Policy and Strategy on Gender Equality and the Environment 2014–2017 (hereinafter the Gender Policy).<sup>1</sup> The present report has been prepared in response to that request.
2. The Gender Policy is the first UNEP policy statement and operational framework that provides strategic direction for gender mainstreaming in UNEP programmes and operations. It is informed by the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) outcome document<sup>2</sup> and the UNEP medium-term strategy for 2014–2017. In addition, the Gender Policy is aligned with the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP).<sup>3</sup> The UNEP Gender Implementation Plan, approved by the UNEP senior management team in 2015, provided the framework for implementing UN-SWAP from 2015 to 2017 and has continued to cover the implementation of the second

\* 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/Rev.1.

<sup>1</sup> Available at <https://www.unenvironment.org/resources/policy-and-strategy/un-environment-policy-and-strategy-gender-equality-and-environment>.

<sup>2</sup> The Gender Policy adopts the gender-related section of “The future we want” (A/RES/66/288) as the official UNEP policy statement on gender and the environment.

<sup>3</sup> UN-SWAP is administered by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). It enables United Nations agencies to develop results-oriented actions that will contribute to gender equality and women’s empowerment.

generation of the action plan (UN-SWAP 2.0) for the period 2018–2022, given that 13 of the 17 original UN-SWAP performance indicators were carried over to the new version of the action plan.

3. This report provides highlights of progress made in the implementation of the Gender Policy since mid-2015.<sup>4</sup> The Gender Policy implementation period was extended to 2020, as the policy continued to provide the framework for integrating gender perspectives into programmes and projects developed under the UNEP medium-term strategy for 2018–2021.

4. The Gender Policy sets out the UNEP business model for gender mainstreaming, which articulates two levels at which gender mainstreaming takes place: the level of the organization and the level of the programme. A strong accountability framework provides the necessary institutional arrangements<sup>5</sup> and enabling conditions for gender mainstreaming in UNEP programmes and operations.

## **I. Progress in the implementation of resolution 4/17**

### **A. Gender mainstreaming at the organizational level**

5. A UNEP gender governance and advisory structure was established to implement the Gender Policy and ensure organizational accountability for gender mainstreaming. Under the ultimate authority and responsibility of the Executive Director, this structure is composed of the Gender Steering Board, the Gender Implementation Committee<sup>6</sup> and the Gender and Safeguards Unit. All staff in UNEP are accountable for the achievement of gender results in their area of work.

6. UNEP has undertaken capacity-building to enhance skills and knowledge on gender mainstreaming among staff of UNEP and the secretariats of the multilateral environment agreements UNEP administers. A self-paced online gender training course in place since 2014 has enhanced the integration of gender equality and women's empowerment into UNEP programmes and projects.<sup>7</sup> To date, 292 staff have received the certificate for completing all three modules of the online course.

7. Joint workshops on gender and results-based management for the staff of UNEP and multilateral environmental agreement secretariats<sup>8</sup> have reached over 600 staff globally. The workshops were guided by a standard 2.5-day training package focused on the results-based management methodology and the integration of gender perspectives into the various stages of the project cycle. Since mid-2020, UNEP has held two in-house webinars to further enhance staff capacity in project development and publications reviews, reaching more than 50 staff members.<sup>9</sup>

8. UNEP is committed to highlighting issues related to gender equality and women's empowerment in its communications and advocacy initiatives. This includes posting regular updates on the UNEP gender web page<sup>10</sup> and producing and disseminating relevant knowledge materials, with the overall objective of nurturing a culture of inclusion in sustainable environmental management initiatives and shaping environmental policies. The UNEP Publications Policy (2019) provides

<sup>4</sup> The Gender Policy became operational after its approval by the Executive Director in February 2015.

<sup>5</sup> The institutional arrangements outlined in the Gender Policy cover governance, implementation, human and financial resources, oversight, capacity development, knowledge generation and communication, and partnerships.

<sup>6</sup> The Gender Implementation Committee includes the Gender Implementation Team, composed of 70 staff nominated as gender coordinators by the respective division or regional office director and the Gender and Safeguards Unit.

<sup>7</sup> Available at <http://unep.unssc.org/>.

<sup>8</sup> Training for multilateral environment agreement secretariats and collaborating centres, including the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the World Conservation Monitoring Centre, the secretariat of the Action Plan for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Sustainable Development of the Coastal Areas of the Mediterranean, the secretariat of the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region and the International Environmental Technology Centre.

<sup>9</sup> The webinar "How to integrate gender in project development" is available at <https://www.ctc-n.org/resources/webinar-how-integrate-gender-project-development>.

<sup>10</sup> The material available at <http://web.unep.org/gender/> aims to strengthen UNEP external engagement, including with stakeholders and policymakers, on matters related to gender and environment.

gender-sensitive guidelines that are applied in screening all UNEP publications for gender sensitivity and inclusivity.<sup>11</sup>

9. UNEP has developed publications showcasing gender success stories, available in the six United Nations official languages.<sup>12</sup> UNEP also published a gender mainstreaming support kit for UNEP staff that provides key entry points for mainstreaming gender equality perspectives into project design and implementation.<sup>13</sup> Additional gender mainstreaming guidelines that provide project-specific support have also been published.<sup>14</sup>

10. UNEP actively promotes and monitors United Nations policies, rules and regulations on work-life balance for all personnel. A gender parity implementation plan, aligned with the United Nations System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity and approved by the Executive Director in 2017,<sup>15</sup> states that UNEP aims to reach parity by 2028. By 2019, significant progress had been made across UNEP, though imbalances still existed at certain job levels.<sup>16</sup>

11. In 2017 and 2019, UNEP conducted “unconscious bias workshops” to make participants aware of biases, including those in recruitment.<sup>17</sup> Sessions were provided for 70 UNEP staff, ranging from the senior management team to support staff.

## B. Gender mainstreaming at the programme level

12. The Gender Policy reiterates the commitment of UNEP to the achievement of gender-sensitive results in its programme performance as a means of working towards environmental sustainability. The UNEP programmes of work for 2014–2015 and 2016–2017 and the UNEP medium-term strategy for 2018–2021 emphasize the inclusion of gender perspectives in policy documents and project design and implementation.<sup>18</sup>

13. Gender considerations, including socioeconomic dimensions, are a prerequisite for UNEP project approval. In 2015, UNEP introduced a gender marker to ensure that any newly developed projects meet certain minimum standards for gender mainstreaming before presentation to the Project Review Committee. The gender marker is a four-point grading system for assessing a project’s level of gender mainstreaming.<sup>19</sup> Steady progress in developing fully compliant projects has been observed

<sup>11</sup> Since 2015, the Gender and Safeguards Unit has reviewed more than 300 publications for gender sensitivity and provided substantive comments.

<sup>12</sup> See, for instance, *Gender Equality and the Environment: A Guide to UNEP’s Work* (<https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/7642>).

<sup>13</sup> The entry points are targeted at projects developed under the seven subprogramme areas. See [https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/25348/Gender\\_Environment\\_Kit.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/25348/Gender_Environment_Kit.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).

<sup>14</sup> Examples of UNEP guidelines for gender mainstreaming include *Guidelines for Assimilating Gender into Integrated Environment Assessments* (2016), *Gender Mainstreaming in the Management of Marine and Coastal Ecosystems* (2019), *Gender Mainstreaming Guidelines for Project Development and Implementation in Eight Countries in the Southern Mediterranean* (2020) (part of the SwitchMed II programme) and *Gender Integration in Renewable Energy Policy* (2020).

<sup>15</sup> The implementation plan provides a road map for achieving the actions and targets set in the United Nations System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity for 2018 and 2019 (<https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/22806/UN%20Environment%20Gender%20Parity%20Implementation%20Plan%202018%20&%202019.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y>).

<sup>16</sup> In August 2019, UNEP staff consisted of 747 women (61 per cent) and 478 men (39 per cent), including 388 female Professional staff (52 per cent) and 354 male Professional staff (48 per cent), as well as 359 female General Service staff (74 per cent) and 124 male General Service staff (26 per cent) (as reported in the audit of the recruitment process at UNEP reflected in Internal Audit Division Report 2019/139).

<sup>17</sup> Available at <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/workshop-gender-unconscious-bias-and-inclusive-management>.

<sup>18</sup> With regard to support for the programme of work for 2014–2015 and 2016–2017, one of the indicators of achievement is the percentage of UNEP projects that can demonstrate the integration of gender considerations in project implementation, with targets of 50 and 60 per cent (see para. 96 of “Formative Evaluation of the UNEP Medium-term Strategy 2014–2017 A review of UNEP programming processes and documents”, available at [https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/292/Formative\\_Evaluation\\_of\\_the\\_UNEP\\_2014-2017\\_Medium\\_Term\\_Strategy.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/292/Formative_Evaluation_of_the_UNEP_2014-2017_Medium_Term_Strategy.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)).

<sup>19</sup> The overall performance of UNEP for the gender marker is monitored and translated into a corporate indicator, “percentage of new projects that receive a gender marker code of 2a or 2b”, to be reported in UNEP annual report and at meetings with the Committee of Permanent Representatives and major donors. See also <https://www.thegef.org/blog/marking-progress-towards-gender-mainstreaming-un-environment>.

since introducing the gender marker in mid-2015. For example, full compliance rates increased from 4.8 per cent in 2015 to 30.8 per cent in 2017 before declining slightly to 28.1 per cent in 2019. Out of 45 projects whose documents had been reviewed by mid-2020, 28 (62 per cent) had been assigned a code of 1, “gender partially mainstreamed”, and 17 (38 per cent) had a code of 2, “gender well mainstreamed”.

14. Since 2015, UNEP has developed and implemented a number of projects highlighting the nexus between gender and environment. These are detailed in the following sections.

## 1. Gender and climate resilience

15. In the past four years, UNEP has developed and implemented projects that highlight the nexus between climate change and gender equality, including, more recently, in peace and conflict situations. For instance, pilot projects on gender and climate security have been undertaken through the Joint Programme for Women, Natural Resources, Climate and Peace (2016–2020).<sup>20</sup> The first of these, “Promoting gender-responsive approaches to natural resource management for peace”, was conducted in the State of North Kordofan in Sudan from 2016 to 2018. It focused on promoting women’s sustainable livelihoods and thereafter supported women’s participation in governance bodies and conflict resolution mechanisms. Through the project, 87 per cent of the women who received livelihood support increased their income, two women’s associations established cooperative farms and the number of women serving as active mediators in dispute resolution increased.<sup>21</sup>

16. Another Joint Programme project, “Realizing the vision for gender equality and sustainable natural resource management in the peace process”, carried out in Colombia from 2017 to 2019 and jointly managed by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and UNEP, aimed to establish the nexus of gender equality, women’s rights and inclusive environmental governance as a foundation for sustainable peace in Colombia.<sup>22</sup> The pilot project strengthened women’s capacity to engage in natural resource governance and management and in conflict prevention and resolution in disputes related to natural resources.

17. UNEP continues to actively contribute to the Joint Programme, advancing knowledge about climate-related security risks and how interventions supporting resilience to climate change can also contribute to security at various levels. It has developed the web-based Knowledge Platform on Women, Natural Resources, Climate and Peace<sup>23</sup> and an in-person training package for practitioners and policymakers on designing gender-responsive approaches to natural resource management and peacebuilding.<sup>24</sup> In 2020, UNEP launched *Gender, Climate and Security: Sustaining Inclusive Peace on the Frontlines of Climate Change*,<sup>25</sup> a report that supports full integration of gender perspectives in the agenda of policy debates and emerging investments in the security dimensions of climate change.

18. EmPower,<sup>26</sup> a five-year UNEP flagship project implemented jointly with UN-Women, focuses on building women’s resilience to climate change in Bangladesh, Cambodia and Viet Nam and at the regional level in Asia and the Pacific. UNEP supports 1,000 women across Cambodia, Bangladesh and Viet Nam in running and benefiting from enterprises that use renewable energy for climate-resilient development by bringing together government, private-sector and financial partners and establishing national funding schemes. The project also works to make climate change policy more gender responsive through the inclusion of gender and climate change indicators and provides capacity-building and evidence, such as through national assessment reports on the state of gender equality and climate change. One key result is the 2020 updated nationally determined contribution for Viet Nam, which has a separate section on gender equality due to UNEP project support. Under EmPower, UNEP

<sup>20</sup> See <https://gender-nr-peace.org/assets/Uploads/5f8b5d57a759f.pdf>. The Joint Programme is a collaboration by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, UNDP, UNEP and UN-Women, which contribute distinct yet complementary expertise to the design of innovative solutions to complex challenges. Its secretariat is hosted in the UNEP Crisis Management Branch.

<sup>21</sup> See [https://postconflict.unep.ch/publications/Sudan\\_Gender\\_NRM2019.pdf](https://postconflict.unep.ch/publications/Sudan_Gender_NRM2019.pdf).

<sup>22</sup> See <https://gender-nr-peace.org/programme/colombia/>.

<sup>23</sup> See <https://gender-nr-peace.org/> for more information on the knowledge platform.

<sup>24</sup> UNEP, in partnership with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, is developing online training on climate change and security with a strong focus on gender as part of the UNEP climate security portfolio. The training will be launched in the first quarter of 2021 and will be hosted on the United Nations climate change e-learning platform.

<sup>25</sup> The report has put gender on the agenda in debates and discussions about the security implications of climate change and has brought climate change considerations onto the agenda on women and peace and security.

<sup>26</sup> See [www.empowerforclimate.org](http://www.empowerforclimate.org).

has published videos, articles,<sup>27</sup> reports, tools and stories on gender equality, climate change and renewable energy, as well as assessments and achievements related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. In 2020, UNEP published *Powering Equality: Women's Entrepreneurship Transforming Asia's Energy Sector*<sup>28</sup> and *Gender Integration in Renewable Energy Policy: A Guideline for Renewable Energy Policy and Decision Makers*.<sup>29</sup>

19. The Women Entrepreneurs and Sustainable Energy in Africa Workshop, held in 2017 and organized by UNEP in collaboration with UN-Women and other partners, led to the development of the African Women Energy Entrepreneurs Framework to enable African women to play a role as change agents and the main stakeholders across the energy value chain, and to address the challenges and barriers hindering women's economic empowerment. The African Women Energy Entrepreneurs Framework has designed a flagship project called "Transforming Climate-Action to empower women entrepreneurs in energy sector", which aims to contribute to climate action through the empowerment of women entrepreneurs in the energy sector. The project is being piloted in Mozambique and the United Republic of Tanzania. The two projects are expected to generate social, economic and environmental benefits, spur entrepreneurship and create at least 30 jobs for women and youth.<sup>30</sup>

20. UNEP has also partnered with Renewable Energy Solutions for Africa (RES4Africa) to enhance access to energy in rural communities and support local enterprises, job creation and income generation by training women entrepreneurs and youth in microgrid applications. To date, 250 women entrepreneurs and youth from various African countries have received training.<sup>31</sup>

21. UNEP has also implemented a number of climate-resilience projects financed by the Global Environment Facility. In Mauritania, for instance, UNEP enhanced the climate resilience of women, youth and the elderly through provision of solar-powered wells and boreholes to support market gardens and for household water supply.<sup>32</sup> In the Gambia, to strengthen climate services and early warning systems, UNEP built the capacity of women as the traditional communicators of climate information and early warning.<sup>33</sup> In the Sudan, UNEP advocated the inclusion of youth and women in all stages of the decision-making processes and structures in project management to enhance community climate resilience.<sup>34</sup>

## 2. Gender and sustainable consumption and production

22. Natural resource use is central to the dynamic links that connect human well-being and essential natural and social capital. The 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (10YFP) aims, among other things, to promote gender equality and the active participation of groups, including women, children and youth, indigenous peoples and those living in the most vulnerable situations. Gender, inequalities and decent jobs are among the human well-being dimensions monitored annually by 10YFP to track progress on the shift to sustainable consumption and production.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>27</sup> "The Case for Women Running Shift to Renewables", *Asia Times*, 28 Feb. 2020, available at <https://asiatimes.com/2020/02/the-case-for-women-running-shift-to-renewables/>.

<sup>28</sup> Available at <https://www.unenvironment.org/resources/report/powering-equality-womens-entrepreneurship-transforming-asias-energy-sector>.

<sup>29</sup> Available at <https://www.empowerforclimate.org/en/resources/g/e/n/gender-integration-in-renewable-energy-policy>.

<sup>30</sup> For more information on the African Women Energy Entrepreneurs Framework, see <http://aweef.thegeo.org/>.

<sup>31</sup> See <https://www.res4africa.org/2018/04/20/unep-and-res4africa-trained-a-delegation-of-african-women-energy-entrepreneurs-at-micro-grid-academy-in-nairobi/#> and <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/energy/what-we-do/gender>. UNEP and UN-Women joined forces in 2016 to develop Women's Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Energy (WESE) (covering Bolivia, India, Indonesia, Morocco, Myanmar, and Senegal) to enhance women's leadership in management of sustainable energy as well as building their capacities as energy entrepreneurs.

<sup>32</sup> See <https://assembly.thegef.org/project/development-improved-and-innovative-management-system-sustainable-climate-resilient>.

<sup>33</sup> See <https://www.thegef.org/project/strengthening-climate-services-and-early-warning-systems-gambia-climate-resilient>.

<sup>34</sup> See <https://www.thegef.org/project/enhancing-resilience-communities-living-climate-change-vulnerable-areas-sudan-using>.

<sup>35</sup> The indicators monitored are based on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 8.5.1 and the International Labour Organization labour force participation rate. This includes the average hourly earnings of female and male employees and the female and male labour force participation rates, as well as on the number of women with

23. Indicative trends across regions and stakeholders show an increase in activities on human well-being, including gender equality, which represent 11 per cent of all activities of the One Planet network<sup>36</sup> in 2018 and 2019. In 2019, 5 per cent of activities across the One Planet network were linked to Sustainable Development Goal 5. Sex disaggregated data on the implementation of activities is collected and analysed and is expected to inform strategies and support gender and social sustainability efforts.<sup>37</sup> In the Asia and the Pacific region, UNEP has developed gender-inclusive “low-carbon lifestyle challenge” start-ups under 10YFP.<sup>38</sup>

24. UNEP is also responsible for the ongoing implementation of the SWITCH Africa Green programme. The programme, currently being implemented in seven African countries,<sup>39</sup> aims to advance green business development, eco-entrepreneurship and sustainable consumption and production practices, with gender equality perspectives integrated into programme implementation.

### 3. Gender, waste and management of chemical substances

25. In 2019, as part of the Waste and Climate Change project aimed at strengthening the capacity of policymakers and practitioners in Bhutan, Mongolia and Nepal to reduce greenhouse gases and short-lived climate pollutants from the waste sector, UNEP published *Gender and Waste Nexus: Experiences from Bhutan, Mongolia and Nepal*, which describes the gender-differentiated labour patterns at every level of the waste management hierarchy.

### 4. Enhancing knowledge on gender and environment

26. In 2016, UNEP published the first edition of the *Global Gender and Environment Outlook*, which comprehensively and critically examines the social dimensions of environmental issues, provides insight into current environmental challenges, and describes policy options and concrete opportunities to contribute to a future of justice and equality that leaves no one behind.

### 5. Implementation of the Gender Policy by the multilateral environmental agreements

27. UNEP is committed to supporting the secretariats of the multilateral environmental agreements in developing gender action plans, enhancing staff capacity regarding gender mainstreaming and using gender-sensitive indicators and sex-disaggregated data in their work.

28. The secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity has supported efforts at the national, regional and international levels to promote and advance implementation of the Gender Plan of Action (2015–2020) under the Convention. Developing countries have been supported in integrating gender into national biodiversity strategies and action plans,<sup>40</sup> developing and testing regional training materials and producing knowledge products and capacity-building tools<sup>41</sup> for a global audience. A recent review of implementation of the Gender Plan of Action<sup>42</sup> revealed that it has had a valuable impact in advancing action on gender equality and women’s empowerment in global efforts to implement the Convention, and to a lesser extent at the national level.<sup>43</sup> While the overall impact of

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access to means of production, land and other forms of property and the number of women in managerial and leadership positions.

<sup>36</sup> The One Planet network was formed to implement the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production, which supports the global shift to sustainable consumption and production and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 12. <https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/>. The 800 partners of the One Planet network and other stakeholders are encouraged to incorporate gender equality into their programmes and activities, as well as to highlight and share their efforts related to gender equality.

<sup>37</sup> For example, information on the gender composition of sustainable consumption and production training across the network show an average participation ratio of 42 women to 58 men. Gender actions in demonstration projects funded by the 10YFP trust fund include identifying women as the primary beneficiaries of training on specific technologies and practices, facilitating access to markets, creating opportunities for new or stable income from products primarily crafted by women, and improving women’s working conditions.

<sup>38</sup> See <https://www.unenvironment.org/regions/asia-and-pacific/asia-pacific-low-carbon-lifestyles-challenge>.

<sup>39</sup> The countries are Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, South Africa and Uganda. See <https://www.unep.org/switchafricagreen/>.

<sup>40</sup> See <https://www.cbd.int/gender/doc/pilot-project-integ-gender-nbsaps.pdf>.

<sup>41</sup> See <https://www.cbd.int/gender>.

<sup>42</sup> Available at <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/2a29/307a/3235fdabd9edd01b9576e42b/sbi-03-02-add3-en.pdf>.

<sup>43</sup> Overall progress in implementation of the Gender Plan of Action (2015–2020) is somewhat difficult to measure because of the limited availability of sex disaggregated data, relevant gender analysis and appropriate indicators.

the Convention secretariat's work may be difficult to gauge, indications such as the agreement on a gender-responsive process to develop the post-2020 global biodiversity framework suggest that there is growing interest in strengthening the focus on gender in work to implement the Convention.<sup>44</sup>

29. The gender action plan<sup>45</sup> of the secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions was updated in March 2019. The plan contains information on what the secretariat has achieved to date with respect to gender and the chemicals and waste agenda. *Gender Heroes: from grassroots to global action*, containing a collection of stories featuring gender perspectives on the management of hazardous chemicals and wastes, was published in 2015.

30. The secretariat for the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) has set up four communities of practice, including one on chemicals and sustainable development goals covering gender and chemicals management.<sup>46</sup> From June to December 2020, the secretariat, in collaboration with the Multi-Stakeholders Processes for Sustainable Development (MSP) Institute, presented a series of short webinars on gender equality in the world of chemistry.<sup>47</sup> The secretariat recently published the report *Women, Chemicals and the Sustainable Development Goals*.<sup>48</sup>

## 6. Shaping regional policies on gender and environment

31. UNEP has supported the development of gender-sensitive environmental policies at the national and global levels. The Network of Women Ministers and Leaders for the Environment, whose Secretariat is hosted by UNEP, remains a key implementing partner in addressing the integration of gender perspectives into environmental management planning processes.

32. In 2017 the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment declared its resolve to adopt the policy and strategy for gender mainstreaming in the environment sector in Africa that had been developed by UNEP in collaboration with the Network of African Women Ministers and Leaders for the Environment.<sup>49</sup> UNEP supported the adoption, in 2019, of the Asia-Pacific Declaration on Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+25 Review, which highlights the role of women as knowledge bearers and change agents for environmental conservation, climate action and resilience-building.

33. UNEP supported the inclusion of gender perspectives in the Buenos Aires Declaration issued at the twenty-first Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean in October 2018.<sup>50</sup> To inform the implementation of the gender aspects of the Buenos Aires Declaration, in 2019 UNEP conducted a situation analysis, described in a draft document entitled "Women and the environment: a preliminary analysis of gaps and opportunities in Latin America and the Caribbean".<sup>51</sup>

34. In 2015, the Poverty-Environment Initiative, UN-Women and the World Bank began publishing studies highlighting the nexus between gender, poverty and environmental management and the economic cost of inaction in addressing gender inequality in use of natural resources.<sup>52</sup> In

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Additionally, reporting by parties on gender considerations often focuses on individual initiatives, making it difficult to draw broader conclusions.

<sup>44</sup> Other indications include increased references to gender in the sixth national reports under the Convention and the interest of representatives of parties and organizations in participating in the Friends of Gender Equality Group established in 2018 under the Convention.

<sup>45</sup> The plan is designed to ensure that the principles of gender equality are firmly embedded in activities undertaken by the secretariat. It was updated in 2016 and again in 2019.

<http://www.brsmeas.org/Gender/BRSGenderActionPlan/Overview/tabid/7998/language/en-US/Default.aspx>.

<sup>46</sup> <https://saicmknowledge.org/topic/community-practice>.

<sup>47</sup> <https://saicmknowledge.org/event/webinar-gender-and-saicm-beyond-2020>.

<sup>48</sup> Available at [https://saicmknowledge.org/sites/default/files/publications/ipen-gender-chemicals-report-v1\\_5web-en.pdf](https://saicmknowledge.org/sites/default/files/publications/ipen-gender-chemicals-report-v1_5web-en.pdf).

<sup>49</sup> Para. 31 of the Libreville Declaration on Investing in Innovative Environment Solutions, set out in annex 1 to the report of the ministerial segment (AMCEN/16/8), available at [https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/25881/amcenmin\\_rep2017.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/25881/amcenmin_rep2017.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).

<sup>50</sup> In the Buenos Aires Declaration, regional ministers agreed, for the first time, "to consider the gender perspective as a significant variable for the development and implementation of public policies on environmental issues, considering the gaps that are present in the region today and the opportunities that arise from the exchange of experiences on this matter to meet the 2030 Agenda requirements and the Sustainable Development Goals".

<sup>51</sup> Available at

[https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/30540/Gender\\_LAC.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/30540/Gender_LAC.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).

<sup>52</sup> Publications about gender, poverty and the environment by the Poverty-Environment Initiative can be found at <https://www.unpei.org> and <https://pea4sdgs.org/knowledge/pea-publications/gender-energy-and-policy-a-review->

Africa, the studies focused on Ethiopia, Malawi, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, and highlighted the cost of the gender gap in agricultural productivity, including linkages to climate change and climate resilience strategies. The Poverty-Environment Initiative regional teams also developed regional equity and gender equality strategies for the UNDP regions of Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States and Latin America and the Caribbean.

35. In the context of the Waste and Climate Change project carried out in Bhutan, Mongolia and Nepal, UNEP supported the development of Nepal's national integrated waste management strategy and action plan, which provides for the collection of detailed gender-disaggregated data and allocation of sufficient resources at the federal, province and municipal levels to support and manage gender mainstreaming activities. The plan has been submitted to the Government for approval and will serve as an example of a gender-responsive national-level strategy.

### C. Oversight and assessment of UNEP work on gender and environment

36. Since 2016, the Office for Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) has regularly assessed the results achieved under both the programme and the operational dimensions of the Gender Policy. In a 2019 OIOS assessment of the applicability of UNEP policies to staff work, 73 per cent of the respondents said that the Gender Policy was helpful for their work.<sup>53</sup>

37. Since 2015, the UNEP Evaluation Office has reported on the UN-SWAP evaluation performance indicator based on assessments of UNEP projects with regard to gender responsiveness.<sup>54</sup> The findings of these reports have enabled UNEP to improve the design and implementation of gender-responsive projects. The UN-SWAP evaluation performance indicator report for 2019 recorded an improvement in project design, though there is room for further improvement.

38. By the end of 2017, UNEP had met or exceeded the requirements for 12 out of 15 UN-SWAP indicators, and its overall UN-SWAP performance rating had increased from 7 per cent to 80 per cent. During the period 2015–2017, UNEP outperformed the aggregate performance indicators of the United Nations System (by 6 per cent) and the United Nations Secretariat (by 3 per cent).<sup>55</sup> In 2018 UNEP met or exceeded only 4 out of 17 indicators of the newly expanded and enhanced UN-SWAP 2.0 launched the same year. The 2019 report card for UNEP implementation of UN-SWAP 2.0 showed improvement, as UNEP met or exceeded the requirements for 8 out of 17 indicators. In November 2020, UNEP senior management team reviewed the 2019 report card and recommended that all projects developed by December 2021 have a transformative gender result and show the measures to achieve it; that by December 2021 all projects have a gender marker code of 2; and that by the last quarter of 2021 all finance management officers receive training on tracking financial resources spent on gender equality and women's empowerment.

### D. Partnerships and stakeholder engagement, including support provided to Member States

39. The Gender Policy emphasizes the importance of building partnerships and networks with a wide range of stakeholders committed to gender equality and the empowerment of women. UNEP is an active member of the Inter-Agency Network for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.<sup>56</sup> UN-Women is the main United Nations partner through which UNEP works to implement gender-related projects in Asia and the Pacific, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean.

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of-energy-policies-in-east-and-southern-africa. See also <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/environmentally-friendly-stoves-reduce-risk-sexual-assault>.

<sup>53</sup> 71 per cent of respondents found that the Gender Policy was clear and well-defined, 46 per cent said that it was fully implemented in their office and 43 per cent said that it was partially implemented. See document E/AC.51/2019/7.

<sup>54</sup> The Evaluation Office is required to apply the principles of gender equality and women's empowerment in evaluating UNEP projects, guided by the United Nations Evaluation Group documents on integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluations (available at <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/980>).

<sup>55</sup> See UNEP, Evaluation Office (2018), *Evaluation Synthesis Report 2016–2017*, para. 267. (Note that the multilateral environmental agreements were not assessed.) For aggregate 2018 UN-SWAP results, see <https://undocs.org/E/2018/53>.

<sup>56</sup> The Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality is a network of gender focal points in United Nations offices, specialized agencies, funds and programmes. It is chaired by UN-Women, which also serves as the secretariat for the network. See <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/ianwge/>.



40. Other partnerships include the consortium of UNEP, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) to coordinate the Feminist Action for Climate Justice Action Coalition in the framework of the Generation Equality Forum. Through the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD),<sup>57</sup> UNEP, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and UNDP have developed tools, guidance and reporting criteria on gender and reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries (REDD+), to enable partners to better integrate gender equality and women's empowerment principles into nationally led REDD+ actions. In 2019, UNEP launched the Network of African Women Environmentalists, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, UN-Women, UNDP, the Wangari Maathai Foundation and Partners for Resilience (under the Dutch Red Cross).

41. UNEP has also developed strong partnerships with international environmental organizations and non-governmental organizations to implement gender and environment projects. This includes the Climate Technology Centre and Network, the International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy, IUCN, the Stockholm Environment Institute and the Women's Environment and Development Organization. A new strategic partnership between UNEP and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Centre for Energy aims to strengthen and promote gender equality in regional platforms, forums, policies and intergovernmental and normative processes related to renewable energy.

42. In its resolution 4/17 the Environment Assembly requested UNEP to facilitate the collection of data and of lessons learned from Member States and other stakeholders on the progress made in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in local, national and global environmental policies, programmes and initiatives.<sup>58</sup>

## **E. Gender, environment and the Sustainable Development Goals (including impacts of COVID-19)**

43. As is demonstrated in the *Global Gender and Environment Outlook* (2016), the Sustainable Development Goals provide a unique opportunity to highlight the centrality of gender equality considerations both in the overall sustainable development agenda and in the role of UNEP as the driver of the environmental dimensions of the agenda.<sup>59</sup>

44. While the Gender Policy was informed by the Rio+20 outcome document and the Millennium Development Goals, it was not designed in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals. An analysis of UNEP projects implemented in the 2018–2019 biennium reveals that, of the 104 projects implemented, only 14 contributed to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5.<sup>60</sup> To address this gap, UNEP plans to update the gender marker to support greater efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5.

45. In March 2019, UNEP developed the Global Framework for Action that was presented and adopted during the meeting of the Network of Women Ministers and Leaders for the Environment held during the fourth session of the Environment Assembly. The framework is informed by four priority areas identified by the *Global Gender and Environment Outlook*,<sup>61</sup> and provides a multi-dimensional

<sup>57</sup> See <https://www.unredd.net/knowledge/redd-plus-technical-issues/gender-security.html> for more information on gender and UN-REDD+ activities.

<sup>58</sup> A summary of the data collected will be prepared in early 2021.

<sup>59</sup> UNEP (2015), *Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda: Why Environmental Sustainability and Gender Equality Are So Important to Reducing Poverty and Inequalities (Perspectives 17)*, available at <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/7464>.

<sup>60</sup> See

<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiYzJiMDIiZDEtM2MzYy00MGNhLWFhMTYtZmI3YjA2ZjJlIiwidCI6IjBmOWUzNWRiLTU0NGYtNGY2MC1iZGNjLTVIYTQxNmU2ZGM3MCIiImMiOjh9>.

<sup>61</sup> The priority areas are the right to land, natural resources and biodiversity (linked to Sustainable Development Goals 1, 5, 14, and 15); access to food, energy, water and sanitation (Sustainable Development Goals 2, 5, 6 and 7); well-being, climate change, sustainable consumption and production and health (Sustainable Development Goals 1, 3, 5, 12 and 13); and women in environmental decision-making at all levels (Sustainable Development Goals 4, 5, 8 and 10).

approach to integrating gender perspectives and developing gender-sensitive indicators to monitor the implementation of the environment-related goals.

46. To support the development of gender-sensitive indicators for monitoring environment-related Sustainable Development Goals, in 2019 UNEP published *Gender and Environment Statistics: Unlocking Information for Action and Measuring the SDGs*. To highlight the important link between women's and men's access to land, natural resources and biodiversity and the implications for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, UNEP published *Sustainable Development Goals Policy Brief – Gender and Environment: Empowering Rural Women*.<sup>62</sup> The UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Action for Sustainable Development Goals initiative<sup>63</sup> uses a rights- and gender-based approach to support the development of policies that reduce inequalities in meeting the targets for Sustainable Development Goals 1, 5 and 10. In 2019, Poverty-Environment Action assessed gaps in Myanmar's government systems for addressing poverty-environment and gender linkages and used the findings to formulate tailor-made strategies to build the required capacity for mainstreaming poverty, environment and gender in the country's development.<sup>64</sup>

47. In June 2018, UNEP co-hosted, with UN-Women and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the Expert Group Meeting on "Building sustainable and resilient societies through the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" in Nairobi.<sup>65</sup> The meeting participants called upon national and subnational governments and other stakeholders to undertake a set of specified measures to ensure gender-responsive implementation of Sustainable Development Goals 6, 7, 11, 12 and 15. These were presented by UN-Women during the high-level political forum on sustainable development held in New York from 9 to 18 July 2018.

48. Over the past eight months, UNEP has begun creating knowledge concerning the gender-differentiated impacts of COVID-19 in the implementation of UNEP programmes and projects.<sup>66</sup> This has included the development of a guidance note on gender and COVID-19 that is aligned with the UNEP COVID-19 response; a think piece on gender and climate change in the context of COVID-19 and the implications for building climate-resilient livelihoods;<sup>67</sup> and rapid socioeconomic assessments of the gendered impact of COVID-19 in Bangladesh, Cambodia and Viet Nam<sup>68</sup> as part of the UNEP COVID-19 strategic response.<sup>69</sup>

## II. Lessons learned

49. UNEP has made progress in the development of gender-responsive projects, but more is needed. Capacity-building of project managers and staff is key to making further improvements. Efforts must continue and be enhanced if UNEP is to advance in meeting its objectives.

50. The gender marker has proven to be a useful benchmark against which to measure the quality of UNEP projects. At the same time, UNEP must take stock of these advancements and make efforts to improve the gender marker, including to better incorporate Sustainable Development Goal 5.

<sup>62</sup> In 2017, UNEP developed a series of factsheets addressing various aspects of ecosystems management and the interlinkages with gender and the Sustainable Development Goals.

<sup>63</sup> UNDP and UNEP launched the Poverty-Environment Action for Sustainable Development Goals initiative in 2018 to replace the Poverty-Environment Initiative.

<sup>64</sup> The Myanmar Governance for Resilience and Sustainability Project. See <https://pea4sdgs.org/knowledge/stories/myanmar-strides-to-mainstream-poverty-environment-and-gender-in-development-policy>.

<sup>65</sup> The report and recommendations of the meeting are available at <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/7/egm-on-building-sustainable-and-resilient-societies>.

<sup>66</sup> As of April 2020, all project officers are required to address the gender impacts of COVID-19 in the development and implementation of their projects.

<sup>67</sup> Inkar Kadyrzhanova and Parimita Mohanty (2020), *Think Piece: Gender and Climate Change in the Context of COVID-19*.

<sup>68</sup> The following resources are available from the EmPower project: *The Impact of COVID-19 on Rural Women and Energy Enterprises*; *The Impact of COVID-19 on Rural Women and Enterprises: A Rapid Socioeconomic Assessment in Bangladesh*; *The Impact of COVID-19 on Rural Women and Enterprises: A Rapid Socioeconomic Assessment in Cambodia*; *The Impact of COVID-19 on Rural Women and Enterprises: A Rapid Socioeconomic Assessment in Viet Nam*. See <https://www.empowerforclimate.org/en/resources>.

<sup>69</sup> UNEP continues to participate in the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality initiative to build capacity and knowledge on gender-differentiated impacts of COVID-19 on the work done by the United Nations. The information generated by the network is shared with UNEP staff to address the gender impacts of COVID-19 in project design and implementation.

51. Despite progress in gender integration in programme and project management, reporting on gender and demonstrating impact at scale must be improved. Project results and reporting must be enhanced to monitor gender integration during project management, in line with design standards, as well as to increase reporting on gender outcomes.
52. Understanding the gender-environment nexus is key to improving comprehension of social and environmental inequities and barriers and to unlocking opportunities to overcome persistent challenges in sustainable development.
53. The Gender Policy should be aligned with UN-SWAP 2.0, the Sustainable Development Goals, the draft medium-term strategy for 2022–2025 and the programme of work and budget for 2022–2023. To ensure that no one is left behind, UNEP must continuously focus on reflecting gender and human rights dimensions and non-discrimination issues in programme and project design, with clear transformative and measurable gender results.

### **III. Recommendation and suggested action**

54. The Environment Assembly may wish take note of the present report.
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