

A photograph of a group of people on a beach, likely engaged in a traditional fishing activity. In the foreground, a man is seen from the side, wearing a wide-brimmed straw hat and a grey long-sleeved shirt with a red and yellow logo on the sleeve. He is holding a thick rope. In the background, a line of people is stretching across the beach, also holding ropes, suggesting they are pulling a large net. The beach is sandy and the sky is a clear, pale blue. The overall scene is captured in a cinematic style with soft lighting.

Environmental Governance Update

NOVEMBER 2021

Cover Photo: Charith Kodagoda /Pexels





The United Nations Environment Programme promotes sound environmental law and governance i.e., the laws, rules, policies and institutions that shape how humans interact with the environment.

This edition of the Environmental Governance Update features our work in the breadth of the projects being undertaken, the lessons from the activities and events on promoting sound environmental law and governance - with only highlights from May to October 2021.

This update focuses on the following work streams of environmental governance:

- [Environmental Rule of Law](#)
- [Human Rights and the Environment](#)
- [Multilateral Environmental Agreements Implementation and Compliance](#)
- [Institutional Strengthening: -](#)
- [Faith for Earth Initiative](#)
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- [Greening the Blue](#)
- [Poverty and Environment Initiative](#)

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Environmental Rule of Law

Environmental rule of law is central to sustainable development. It integrates environmental needs with the essential elements of the rule of law and provides the basis for improving environmental governance. See below selected highlights from projects such as Addressing Environmental Challenges through the Law at the International and National levels:

New Landmark UN Resolution recognizes the right to a healthy environment. The United Nations Human Rights Council adopted a landmark resolution recognizing that access to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is a human right. More than 80 per cent of UN Member States already recognize the right to a healthy environment through national law, court decisions or regional treaties.

[Read more](#)

Principles and Policy Guidance on Children's Rights to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment in the ASEAN Region

Launched. The collaborative report between UNEP, UNICEF and UN Human Rights, sets out fundamental principles for realizing children's rights to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, and for putting the best interests of children at the centre of initiatives throughout Southeast Asia. [Read more](#)

The Secretary-General's report, Our Common Agenda, was

launched in September. The report identifies the upcoming year 2022 as pivotal for people and planet to lift the world away from divisiveness and fragmentation and to build upon lessons learnt from recent crises. The report includes recommendations to declare a climate emergency and recognize the right to a healthy environment. [Read more](#)



Human Rights and the Environment

The field of human rights obligations related to a clean, safe, healthy and sustainable environment is expanding. Similarly, the interdependency of human rights and the environment is rapidly growing in acceptance and understanding among governments.

See below selected highlights featuring human rights obligations related to the environment featuring the empowerment of individuals, peoples, and communities to combat the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution:

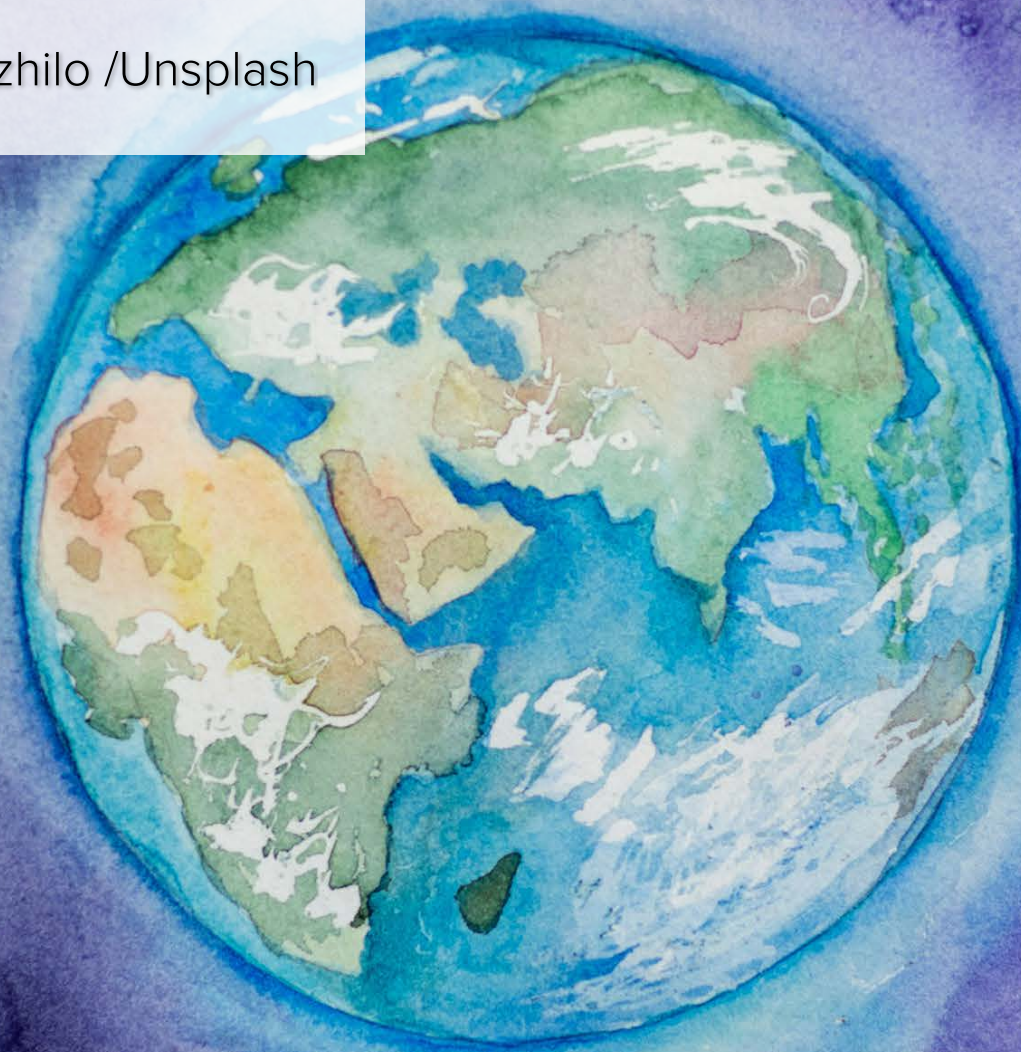
Photo: Hiveboxx /Unsplash

- **UNEP and OHCHR release third Environmental Rights Bulletin, thematically focused on biodiversity.** The third edition of the Bulletin, released in October 2021, is thematically focused on biodiversity and human rights. [Read more](#)
- **UNEP advances partnership with OECD and UNFCCC Secretariat on Responsible Business Conduct.** As part of its growing collaboration with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat (UNFCCC secretariat), UNEP and partners convened a session on the margins of the 2021 Global Forum on Responsible Business Conduct titled, “Translating climate ambition into a just transition: what should we expect from business?” Read more on the session [here](#).

Multilateral Environmental Agreements Implementation and Compliance

Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) are one of the key instruments of international environmental governance and international environmental law. See highlights on the work of MEA implementation and compliance involve provision of policy advice, capacity-building services, and technical assistance to countries and the secretariats of the 15 MEAs that UNEP administers, as well as other global conventions. This work is key in amplifying impact across the global environmental agenda through enhanced cooperation with the MEAs, to support the implementation of environmental treaties. Important aspects include UNEP's OzonAction's support to 147 developing countries in making their Montreal Protocol targets:

Photo: Elena Mozhilo /Unsplash



- **Asia-Pacific Networks address Montreal Protocol operations in the throes of COVID-19.** To support National Ozone Officers (NOOs) from the Regional Networks of South Asia (SA), Southeast Asia (SEA), and Pacific Island Countries (PICs) in exchanging ideas on how to continue delivering approved activities under the Multilateral Fund amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) OzonAction Compliance Assistance Programme (CAP), Asia and the Pacific Office organized three virtual network meetings consecutively on 17, 19 and 25 August 2021. [Read more](#)
- **The ACP MEAs Programme Policy Brief: Building Back Better.** The brief provides entry points for exploring policy options in areas related to environmental governance, MEAs, and ocean governance for countries that are embarking on designing post-COVID-19 recovery plans. [Read more](#)
- **Building capacity of African Environmental Journalists on chemicals and waste management.** On 6 July 2021, the Programme in collaboration with the Africa Network of Environmental Journalists (ANEJ) organized a virtual capacity building and awareness-raising briefing session for environmental journalists in Africa on issues of environmental governance, focusing on chemicals and waste management and related MEAs. [Read more](#)

Institutional strengthening

Strong environmental law is the bedrock of environmental governance and a cornerstone of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. At UNEP we are working internationally and with over 50 individual countries to ensure the progressive development of environmental law.

Hence, this section highlights activities focused on bringing people from various institutions to the table such as customs officers (Green Customs Initiatives), faith leaders and faith-based organization (Faith For Earth):



- **Updated relaunch of the Basel, Stockholm, and Rotterdam Convention courses.** A new and updated version of the Basel Convention course is now available on [InforMEA](#). The new version also includes recent updates to the Convention, such as the “Plastics Amendment. Access the [course](#) and the [syllabus](#).
- **National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), Human Rights and Environment.** With a growing awareness on the importance of human rights and environment, more NHRIs are also including human rights and environment activities in their work plans, and building knowledge, skills, and tools related to human rights and environment. UNEP has partnered with the Asia Pacific Forum of

NHRIs (APF), a network of 25 NHRIs across Asia and the Pacific, to develop a new online course on “NHRIs and Environmental Rights”. An updated version of this course can be accessed [here](#).

Photo: Monstera /Pexels

Faith for Earth Initiative

UNEP’s Faith for Earth Initiative works to inspire and empower faith organizations and their leaders to advocate for protecting the environment; green faith-based organizations’ investments and assets; provide faith organizations with the knowledge and networks to effectively communicate with decision-makers and the public. Read more about the Faith for Earth Initiative [here](#).

InforMEA Explainers

As part of a growing series exploring the interconnections between environmental issues and the international legal frameworks in place to address them, InforMEA has a series of new online products explaining the environmental issues and delving into how InforMEA can be used to research the web of law behind them. Check out InforMEA's series of videos and infographics below for a deeper outlook:

How InforMEA Works: Peatlands

Saving the Bees: InforMEA & Pollinator Protection

Plastic

Collaboration & Sustainability in the

United Nations

[Sustainable Recovery through Sustainable Fashion: Focus on the Environmental Dimensions](#) was organized in close collaboration with the UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion, UNCTAD, UNEP, UNECE, UNESCO, UNFCCC and ILO to facilitate an exchange of different approaches to address the environmental facets of the Sustainable Fashion Nexus, in pursuit of a sustainable recovery in the COVID-19 context. The outcome document can be found [here](#).

Photo: Quan Nguyen /Unsplash



Greening the Blue

UNEP's Sustainable United Nations (SUN) facility has been working on internalizing environmental sustainability management for over ten years. This long-term interagency endeavor, relies on the leadership and technical support provided by the UN Environment Programme to:

- Provide technical assistance including harmonized methodologies and tools to quantify and reduce the UN system's environmental impact.
- Transparently report and communicate on efforts and improvements made throughout the UN system.
- Facilitate the networking and sharing of knowledge and experiences among sustainability Focal Points.

Poverty and Environment Initiative

Under UNDP–UNEP’s Poverty-Environment Action for Sustainable Development Goals (2018-2022), Indonesia Poverty-Environment Action Technical Assistance supports the ongoing Sustainable Development Financing Framework in Indonesia that focuses on greening the process of policy decision making, budget planning and monitoring, greening government investments and accelerating mainstreaming of gender in the processes.



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