

UNEP – your partner for people and planet

Part 1 This is UNEP



2024
EDITION

UNEP's mission: to inform, enable and inspire

To address the triple planetary crisis, UNEP's mission is to inform, enable and inspire nations and people to improve their quality of life – without compromising that of future generations.

to inform...

UNEP evidence about the state and health of the planet contributes solutions to the triple planetary crisis.

Monitoring the state and health of our planet and informing society about environmental risks and opportunities are at the heart of UNEP's work. This includes publishing several scientific reports, such as Global Environment Outlook (GEO).

UNEP scans the horizon for emerging environmental threats.

UNEP science sounds an early warning signal for emerging environmental challenges. From the threat posed to our oceans by microplastics; the consequences of antimicrobial resistance for human and environmental health; and the threats presented by emerging zoonotic diseases, UNEP provides nuanced, timely and credible evidence to address and respond to these challenges.

UNEP provides guidance on sound policies to address challenges facing the planet and humankind.

UNEP operates at the interface between science and policy to ensure decision-making prioritizes a healthy planet for healthy people, and also hosts the secretariats of science-policy platforms, amplifying their reach to a wide range of stakeholders.

to enable...

UNEP encourages and helps countries to deliver on their environmental commitments.

UNEP builds capacity and supports the integration of environmental sustainability into economic and social development. UNEP provides tools and facilitates transfer of cutting-edge technologies that help countries make their own progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

UNEP supports strong environmental laws and institutions for the health of planet and people.

UNEP plays an integral role in shaping and promoting sound environmental governance: the rules, laws, policies and institutions that underpin human interaction with the environment. UNEP has played a leading role in supporting the negotiation and implementation of several environmental conventions and hosts the secretariats of 15 multilateral environmental agreements (see p.27).

UNEP brings people together to tackle the planetary emergency, including through the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA).

UNEP is the only global actor with the mandate and capacity to set the international environmental agenda, bringing together nations, thought leaders, businesses and civil society to build consensus on global solutions (see p.10).

UNEP facilitates South-South and triangular cooperation.

UNEP helps countries to collaborate in areas related to its mandate by facilitating partnerships, providing technical assistance, building capacity and providing knowledge. UNEP support also empowers countries to shape home-grown responses to developmental problems.

UNEP promotes a shift of investment and business practices towards sustainable consumption and production.

UNEP builds on its decades-long normative work on sustainable finance, the inclusive green economy, and sustainable trade, consumption and production to support the progress towards the 2030 Agenda.

UNEP is the voice for the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the UN.

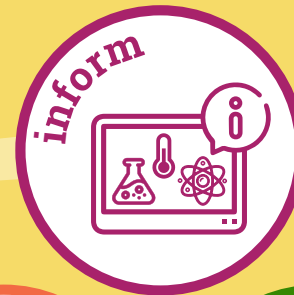
The **UN development system reform** is an opportunity to extend UNEP's reach as the global environmental authority in support of all Member States' pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals. UNEP ensures that the environmental dimensions of the SDGs are given due attention as countries progress on the development path.

UNEP enables countries to access financing and programming from global funds.

As a key partner of environmental funds such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Adaptation Fund (AF) and the Multilateral Fund (Montreal Protocol) UNEP enables countries to access financing and programming through them and other bilateral or multilateral public sources (see p.30).

UNEP seeks to minimize environmental threats to human well-being caused by disasters and conflicts.

UNEP raises awareness about environmental risks and reduces vulnerability to natural and industrial hazards; ensures that environmental concerns are part of response, recovery and building back greener; and analyses and addresses the interlinkages between environment, climate change and peace and security.



to inspire...

UNEP raises awareness and advocates for effective action on the triple planetary crisis.

UNEP campaigns promote effective, multi-stakeholder action for environmental solutions, inspiring positive change on a global scale. The **World Environment Day** has since 1973 become a global focal event to celebrate public participation in action to save the planet and its populations.

UNEP uses the power of technology and digital & social media to educate young people

Partnering with celebrities, the video game industry and education platforms UNEP raises awareness about environmental issues and nature - and our place in it.

UNEP celebrates and honours individuals and institutions for outstanding environmental work.

The **Champions of the Earth** award is the UN's highest environmental honour, recognizing outstanding leaders from government, civil society and the private sector whose actions have a transformative impact on the environment.

UNEP's vision: to tackle the triple planetary crisis

The world is facing a triple planetary crisis...

We are in the midst of three major, interconnected environmental crises – climate change, biodiversity and nature loss, and pollution and waste – driven by human activity and unsustainable patterns of consumption and production. Our relationship with the natural world is at jeopardy; the cost of the degradation to Earth's capacity risks its ability to sustain human well-being and the survival of millions of species.

The changing climate, the continued loss of nature and biodiversity, and the associated land degradation and desertification as well as the exponential increase of pollution and waste represent immediate threats to our very survival. Across the world there are devastating examples of human death and suffering due to the harm we perpetuate on our planet.

We need urgent and meaningful action to step back from crucial thresholds that could irreversibly change critical socioecological systems.

We need combined, collective action to forestall the effects of new pandemics and sudden changes to food supply that will endanger our economic and social well-being and undermine opportunities to reduce poverty and improve lives and livelihoods.

**UNEP envisions a future
where humanity lives
in harmony with nature on a
pollution free, climate-stable planet**

...we need to make peace with nature

In its landmark **Making Peace with Nature** report, synthesized from global environmental assessments, UNEP provides a scientific blueprint to tackle the triple planetary crisis in a systematic fashion. The report shows that ambitious and coordinated action by governments, businesses and people around the world can prevent and reverse the worst impacts of environmental decline by rapidly shifting key systems including energy, water and food so that our use of the land and oceans becomes sustainable.

UNEP is committed to transforming our social and economic systems to improve our relationship with nature, understand its value and place that value at the heart of our decision-making. This report shows that together, we **can** transform our impact on the world.

As the UN Secretary-General has said, "making peace with nature is the defining task of the 21st Century. It must be the top, top priority for everyone, everywhere".



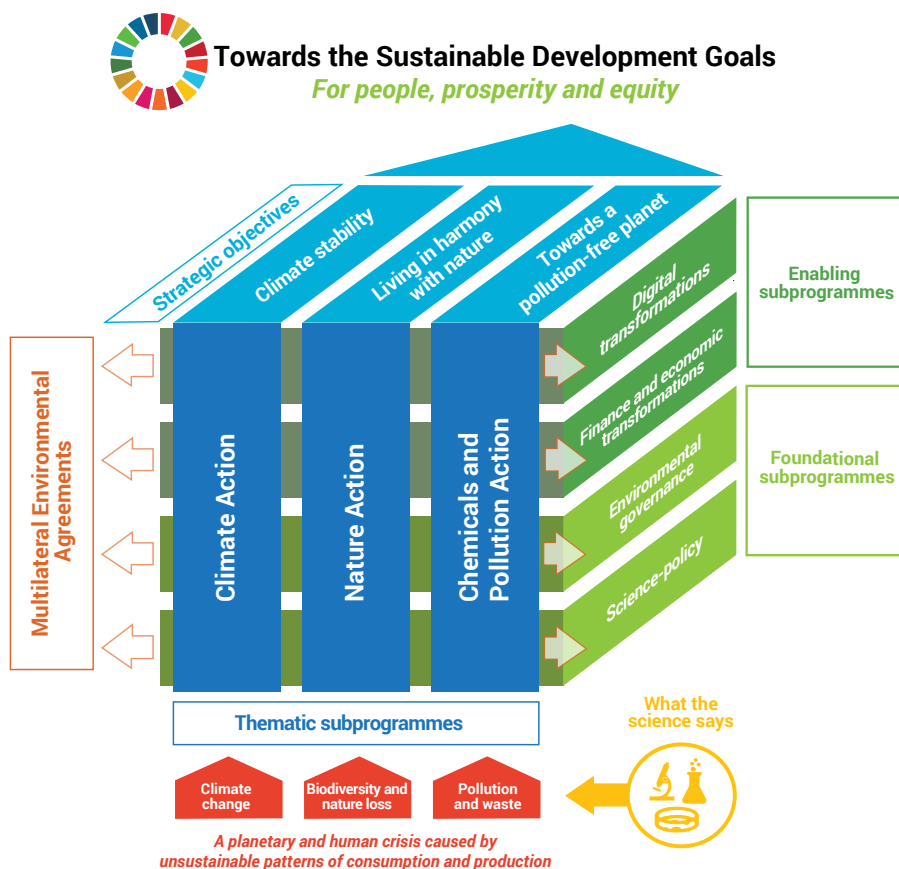
UNEP's strategy: supporting countries to deliver on promises made

UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy - **For People and Planet (2022-2025)** - places the three environmental crises of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss and pollution and waste at the heart of its work.

Informed by the latest science and in collaboration with the multilateral environmental agreements, the strategy articulates UNEP's role in addressing these challenges and supporting countries to deliver on their promises under the **Sustainable Development Goals** and the

Decade of Action, the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and its outcome document, **The Future We Want**.

The strategy has a four-year timeframe and is approved by UNEP Member States at UNEA. The strategic objectives are delivered through the three thematic subprogrammes, by two foundational subprogrammes and two enabling subprogrammes (see p.5-8).



UNEP's Programme of Work: action in support of people and planet

Thematic Subprogrammes

Three **thematic subprogrammes** outline the principal areas of action of the medium-term strategy in response to the triple planetary crisis.



Climate Action

UNEP supports countries to lower greenhouse gas emissions, to adapt to an already-changing climate, and to help countries access climate finance.



Climate change and its consequences have escalated into a climate crisis, or a 'code red' for humanity as expressed by the UN Secretary-General. UNEP has a unique role within the United Nations system for addressing climate-related impacts, loss, and damage, through a combination of science, policy, and action, along with the power to convene Member States and other stakeholders.

Joint work with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and other UN agencies have consistently set the global tone for climate ambition and action, including by shaping the negotiations through the Gap Reports (see p.19).

UNEP supports government and non-government development partners to ensure that actions are compatible with the long-term mitigation and adaptation goals of the Paris Agreement. By supporting demand-driven technical assistance on climate information, early warning systems and capacity building, UNEP helps country decision-makers to use information on climate change impacts for decision-making purposes. This work also supports livelihoods of the most vulnerable populations – enabling resilience of health and well-being, food, and water security.



Nature Action

UNEP supports sustainable management of nature, its recovery and contribution to human well-being.

The health and existence of humanity fundamentally rely on nature. For 50 years, UNEP has promoted a global understanding of the value of ecosystems in balance, the value of biodiversity and the imperative to continue to combat nature loss and desertification. In doing so, UNEP has shared science with policy actors and decision makers to hold and reverse both land degradation and biodiversity loss. UNEP's support to countries to build the resilience of landscapes and seascapes contributes to their progress toward sustainable development.

UNEP helps countries measure the true value of nature and mainstream the economics of ecosystem services into consumer, infrastructure and financial decision-making. UNEP works with scientists and policy makers worldwide to place biodiversity at the heart of decision-making on environment and development. It supports strengthening the capacity of countries in the implementation of an ambitious global biodiversity framework under the Convention on Biological Diversity to back more, larger and better-managed conservation areas, biodiversity-positive agriculture and fisheries, an end to harmful subsidies, and a move away from destructive extractive resource mining to patterns of sustainable consumption and production. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework agreed in 2022 sets the world towards an ambitious pathway to reach the global vision of a world living in harmony with nature by 2050.



Chemicals and Pollution Action

UNEP works to minimize the adverse effects of chemicals and pollution on human health and the environment.



Air pollution is the greatest environmental threat to human health and causes 7 million premature deaths annually. The estimated 11 million metric tonnes of plastic currently entering the ocean annually will triple in the next 20 years. Hazardous chemicals are found in raw materials and feedstocks, used during production, and are part of millions of different end products. Annual waste generation is expected to increase by 73 per cent from 2020 levels to 3.88 billion tonnes in 2050.

UNEP works to enhance capacity and leadership in the sound management of chemicals and waste, especially in high impact sectors, with focus on increased circularity, safe recovery of secondary raw materials and progressive reduction of open burning and dump sites. UNEP is committed to seeing the reduction of releases of pollutants to air, water, soil and the ocean. UNEP also hosts the secretariats of global and regional treaties and frameworks for the protection of human health and the environment from hazardous chemicals and waste.

Foundational Subprogrammes

Two **foundational subprogrammes** underpin UNEP's action on the triple planetary crisis, drawing on the organization's core expertise in science-policy and environmental law and governance.



Science-Policy

UNEP keeps you informed about the state of the planet and bridges the gap between science and policy.

With a dedicated team of scientists and experts, and a global network of collaborative centres, UNEP is a neutral and trusted source, and the only Member State-led organization that has the mandate to assess the world's environmental resources and provide guidance to decision makers.

UNEP has been instrumental in creating several science-policy platforms that bring together scientists, governments, industrial and international organizations,



and civil society. These platforms support policymaking and decision making with scientific, evidence-based information, and UNEP's scientific assessments support enhanced environmental policymaking and governance.

UNEP's **World Environment Situation Room** is a dynamic knowledge platform designed to collect, process and share the world's best environmental science and research, as well as the mass of new data from satellites, drones and citizen science.



Environmental Governance

UNEP supports strong environmental laws and institutions for a healthy planet and healthy people.

UNEP promotes environmental governance: the rules, policies and institutions that shape how humans interact with the natural world. It helps countries enhance coherent and effective implementation of multilateral environmental agreements, and to strengthen both environmental rule of law and the institutions that uphold it.

UNEP action helps strengthen existing environmental laws and develop new instruments and governance approaches, such as in the field of mercury (see p.18) or plastic pollution



(see p.12). UNEP also hosts the secretariat of 15 multilateral environmental agreements covering a wide range of environmental issues.

Being the highest-level forum to address emerging environmental issues, the UN Environment Assembly formulates guidance for normative action and shapes global discussions on the interplay between environmental protection and sustainable development.

Enabling Subprogrammes

Two **enabling subprogrammes** facilitate UNEP's responses in addressing the triple planetary crisis by engaging with the public and private sectors to profoundly transform economic, finance and societal systems, and leveraging digital transformations for the environment.



Finance and Economic Transformation

UNEP promotes the shift of system-wide economic policies, finance and business practices towards sustainable patterns of consumption and production.

To allow for humanity to flourish within planetary boundaries, we need to examine how our economies and societies function, what we value and how we measure progress. Shifting economic policies as well as finance and business practices towards sustainable patterns of consumption and production that help reduce climate impacts, biodiversity loss, and pollution will be critical to achieving the 2030 Agenda.

At the height of the economic and financial crisis in 2008, UNEP launched its Green Economy Initiative, pioneering the concept of "green economy" as one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities.

In addressing the triple planetary crisis, UNEP continues to build on and integrate its decades-long normative work on sustainable finance, inclusive green economy, circularity and value chains, sustainable trade, consumption and production. This is all the more important as an opportunity for green recovery when the world's economies build back from the effects of COVID-19, and to build the sustainability and resilience of socio-economic and financial systems to crises.



Digital Transformations

UNEP helps stakeholders harness data and digital technologies to accelerate and scale solutions to the triple planetary crisis.

The adoption of data and digital technologies define our age: big data and AI influence almost every online activity and behaviour. The future of humanity and the health of our planet depend to a large extent on how we undergo this digital transformation. We must drive the adoption of sustainable digital technologies that help build a healthier, safer, cleaner and more equitable future.

Through the digital transformations programme, and by co-championing the Coalition for Digital Environmental



Sustainability (CODES) as part of the UN Secretary General's Digital Cooperation Roadmap, UNEP will play three important roles; (i) provide access to environmental data for risk assessment and predictive analysis to empower partners to make data-driven decisions; (ii) help companies adopt best practices in using digital platforms to influence financial markets, supply chains and consumer behaviors; and (iii) enhance the digital capabilities of governments to harness data and digital technologies as a means of implementation for SDGs.