



Environmental governance

United Nations Environment Programme



An overview

Governing our planet's rich and diverse natural resources is an increasingly complex challenge. In our globalised world of interconnected nations, economies and people, managing environmental threats, particularly those that cross political borders such as air pollution and biodiversity loss, will require new global, regional, national and local responses involving a wide range of stakeholders.

Effective environmental governance at all levels is critical for finding solutions to these challenges. Environmental Governance comprises the rules, practices, policies and institutions that shape how humans interact with the environment.

Good environmental governance takes into account the role of all actors that impact the environment. From governments to NGOs, the private sector and civil society, cooperation is critical to achieving effective governance that can help us move towards a more sustainable future.

UNEP's mandate is to be the leading global environmental authority. From delivering expert scientific assessments to providing international platforms for negotiation and decision-making, UNEP has been fulfilling this mandate since 1972.

UNEP's Environmental Governance sub-programme promotes informed environmental decision-making to enhance global and regional environmental cooperation and governance. Working with States and all major groups and stakeholders, UNEP helps to bridge the science and policy gaps by keeping the state of the global environment under review, identifying threats at an early stage, developing sound environmental policies, and helping States successfully implement these policies.

Our goals

The Environmental Governance sub-programme focuses on strengthening global, regional, national and local environmental governance to address agreed environmental priorities. The sub-programme has four key goals:

- **Sound science for decision-making:** UNEP aims to influence the international environmental agenda by reviewing global environmental trends and emerging issues, and bringing these scientific findings to policy forums.
- **International cooperation:** UNEP helps States cooperate to achieve agreed environmental priorities, and supports efforts to develop, implement and enforce new international environmental laws and standards.

- **National development planning:** UNEP promotes the integration of environmental sustainability into regional and national development policies, and helps States understand the benefits of this approach.

- **International policy setting and technical assistance:** UNEP works with States and other stakeholders to strengthen their laws and institutions, helping them achieve environmental goals, targets and objectives.

Poverty alleviation

Almost half the jobs worldwide depend on fisheries, forests or agriculture. Non-sustainable use of natural resources, including land, water, and these forests and fisheries, threaten individual livelihoods as well as local, national and international economies. Current environmental governance arrangements are inadequate and have led to continued degradation of the environment. Considerations for a reformed regime must take into account the economic and social benefits of preserving the environment.

As the leading global environmental authority since 1972, UNEP has a rich history of helping States meet the challenges of environmental governance.





Our vision for 2010-2013

What if States could craft environmental policies based on up-to-date, accurate information on emerging issues and the state of the global environment? What if environmental sustainability was an integral part of all national development planning, helping to reduce poverty and increase long-term security for vulnerable populations? What if States could cooperate effectively on the global stage, developing international agreements that moved us closer to a sustainable future? And what if States could enter into lasting and effective strategic alliances with major groups and stakeholder to achieve common goals and objectives?

UNEP's Environmental Governance sub-programme is working to make this vision a reality during the 2010-13 period of UNEP's Medium-term Strategy. From providing decision-makers with access to sound science to enhancing global and regional cooperation, UNEP has a rich history of helping States meet the challenges of environmental governance.

UNEP's vision is based on delivering:

International cooperation

UNEP has unparalleled convening power on the global stage. UNEP will continue to use its experience as a neutral facilitator to enhance cooperation between States and other actors to support international decision-making, and ensure environmental threats are effectively addressed. To enhance the quality and impact of this work, UNEP will also support political and programmatic cooperation with a broad and diverse spectrum of major groups and stakeholders.

Strengthened national laws and institutions

To achieve their environmental commitments and goals, States need strong legislative, political and judicial systems. UNEP will use its expertise in environmental policy and law to help States further develop these institutions, and enhance their ability to effectively participate in international negotiations.

Sustainable regional and national development

UN country teams play a critical role in providing the supporting services needed to address environmental issues. UNEP will continue to work with these teams, as well as national governments, to mainstream environmental sustainability into development policies. UNEP will also support regional development, contributing to the establishment and strengthening of institutional arrangements to manage transboundary natural resources.

Access to sound science

As a science-based organization, UNEP provides environmental data and information that is critical to crafting effective policy solutions. UNEP will produce and communicate this information and help connect scientific networks to national governments to bridge the science-policy gap.





UNEP works with States and all major groups and stakeholders to help bridge science and policy.

Delivering our vision

UNEP's work on Environmental Governance is focused on four core services:

Sound science for decision-making

UNEP supports coherent international decision-making processes for environmental governance.

- **Global Environment Outlook**

The GEO is UNEP's flagship assessment and the only UN report with an outlook component to provide a regular update on the state and trends of the global environment. It identifies policy options and their indicative costs and benefits, bringing diverse stakeholder groups together to raise awareness on these key trends and policy solutions. UNEP is currently working on the fifth GEO which will be published in 2012, and will contribute to the Rio+20 preparations.

- **Scientific networks**

To help close science-policy gaps, UNEP works to connect key scientific networks to policymakers and development authorities.

- **Capacity building tools and services**

UNEP helps States and other actors design and deploy tools to regularly monitor their natural resources and keep their environmental situation under review.

International cooperation

UNEP catalyses international efforts to implement internationally agreed objectives.

- **International laws, norms and standards**

UNEP promotes cooperation on environmental policy between governments, UN agencies, other intergovernmental bodies, and major groups and stakeholders. UNEP's work focuses in particular on aligning international laws and standards with the goals, targets and commitments identified in the UN's Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law (Montevideo Programme).

- **Setting the global agenda**

UNEP uses alert services, such as annual reports, to update the global community on emerging environmental issues, problems and trends. UNEP also uses its many assessments and indicators on the state of the global environment to steer the global policy dialogue. To enhance cooperation, UNEP helps link national and regional agendas through the priorities set by regional and subregional ministerial environmental fora and the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC/GMEF).

International policy setting and technical assistance

UNEP helps governments further develop and strengthen their national, subregional and regional policies, laws and institutions underpinning environmental governance, and develop tools and methods for environmental management.

- **Environmental law and institutions**

UNEP helps governments develop and strengthen their judicial, political and legal systems to provide a sound basis for environmental governance.

- **Stakeholder engagement**

UNEP actively engages in strategic partnerships with national governments, major groups and stakeholders, ranging from NGOs to businesses and civil society. UNEP helps national governments use these partnerships to harness a participatory, results-oriented approach to addressing environmental challenges.

National development planning

UNEP helps governments and regional institutions place environmental sustainability at the heart of their development policies, and make full use of the UN Development Group platform. UNEP also helps governments to understand and manage environmental data and information, providing a sound basis for environmental governance.

- **Regional institutions**

UNEP helps develop and strengthen institutional arrangements across the world that support sustainable management of shared natural resources, and address transboundary environmental issues.

- **Poverty and Environment Initiative (PEI)**

UNEP works with UNDP to run the joint Poverty and Environment Initiative, a global programme that helps States understand how sustainable management of natural resources can help reduce poverty and improve livelihoods. PEI currently provides 22 countries with the technical and financial support needed to integrate environmental sustainability into policy and budgeting.

- **One UN and UN Development Assistance Frameworks processes**

UNEP works with the UN system at the country, regional and global levels to integrate principles of environmental sustainability across UN services.



Our key projects

Project title	Project brief	Geographic scope	Budget (2010-2011)
Sound science for decision-making			
The Fifth Global Environment Outlook: Integrated Environmental Assessment	Keeping the state of the global environment under review by delivering the fifth report in the Global Environment Outlook series in 2012.	Global, regional	\$9.3 million
Environmental Assessments, Outlooks, Alerts and Indicator Reports	Conducting regional, subregional and thematic environmental assessments, outlooks, indicator reports and alerts, and ensuring they are communicated and used by decision-makers and relevant stakeholders.	Regional	\$4.9 million
Multidisciplinary Networks to Integrate Environment into Development Processes	Ensuring that multidisciplinary scientific networks are more strategically connected to policymakers and development practitioners to integrate environment into development processes.	Global, regional	\$10 million
Regional and National Capacity Building	Delivering a multi-scaled set of capacity building products and services to enable UNEP's clients to keep national and sub-national environmental situations continually under review.	Global, regional, national	\$7.9 million
International cooperation			
Global Environmental Agenda Setting to Strengthen International Cooperation in the Field of the Environment	Contributing to international cooperation on environmental policy among governments, UN agencies and other intergovernmental bodies, through the global environmental agenda set by the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC/GMEF).	Global	\$3 million
Support for Multilateral Environmental Agreements	Enhancing cooperation between UNEP and multilateral environmental agreements and aligning the policies of governments and UN agencies with the objectives of those agreements.	Global	\$15.3 million
Support to Regional and Subregional Ministerial Forums on Key Environmental Issues	Promoting increased coherence in international decision-making processes related to the environment by facilitating cooperation on priority environmental issues in the regions and linking regional and global environmental agendas.	Global, regional	\$5 million
National development planning			
Integrating Environmental Sustainability into the UN System	Supporting the UN Country Teams with environmental information, guidance and technical expertise to integrate environmental sustainability into UN Development Assistance Frameworks and UN common country programming processes	Global	\$8.7 million
UNDP-UNEP Poverty and Environment Initiative (PEI)	Integrating poverty-environment linkages into national and sectoral development plans and budgets.	Global, regional, national	\$33 million
Institutional Arrangements for the Governance of Shared Natural Resources and Transboundary Environmental Issues	Establishing and strengthening institutional arrangements across the world to address the management of shared natural resources and transboundary environmental issues.	Global, regional, national	\$3 million
International policy setting and technical assistance			
Enhancing States' Capacity to Strengthen and Implement Environmental Law	Ensuring international and national environmental laws and institutions are further developed, strengthened and implemented for States to effectively govern emerging and important issues, and to achieve intergovernmentally agreed environmental objectives and goals.	Global	\$23 million
Engaging Major Groups for Policy Dialogue	Contributing to inter-sectoral and inter-governmental policy dialogues and partnerships between major groups and stakeholders and multiple sectors of Governments on emerging environmental issues to form priority goals, targets and objectives.	Global	\$8 million

Factsheets in this series

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