



The **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** coordinates [United Nations](#) environmental activities, assisting developing countries in implementing environmentally sound policies and practices. It was founded as a result of the [United Nations Conference on the Human Environment](#) in June 1972 and has its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. UNEP also has six regional offices and various country offices.

UNEP is the designated authority of the United Nations system in environmental issues at the global and regional level. Its mandate is to coordinate the development of environmental policy consensus by keeping the global environment under review and bringing emerging issues to the attention of governments and the international community for action. The mandate and objectives of UNEP emanate from United Nations General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 15 December 1972 and subsequent amendments adopted at UNCED in 1992, the Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of UNEP, adopted at the Nineteenth Session of the UNEP Governing Council, and the Malmö Ministerial Declaration of 31 May 2000.

Its activities cover a wide range of issues regarding the atmosphere, marine and terrestrial [eco systems](#)

. It has played a significant role in developing international environmental conventions, promoting

[environmental science](#)

and information and illustrating the way those can work in conjunction with policy, working on the development and implementation of policy with national governments and regional institution and working in conjunction with environmental Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). UNEP has also been active in funding and implementing environmentally related development projects.

UNEP has aided in the development of guidelines and treaties on issues such as the

international trade in potentially harmful chemicals, transboundary air pollution, and contamination of international waterways.

The [World Meteorological Organization](#) and the UNEP established the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) (IPCC) in 1988. UNEP is also one of several Implementing Agencies for the [Global Environment Facility](#) (GEF).

## // **Executive Director**

UNEP's current Executive Director is [Achim Steiner](#), who succeeded previous director [Klaus Töpfer](#) in 2006. Dr Töpfer served two consecutive terms, beginning in February 1998.

On 15 March 2006, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, nominated Achim Steiner, former Director General of the IUCN to the position of Executive Director. One day later, the UN General Assembly followed Annan's proposal and elected him. <sup>[ 1 ]</sup> However, the nomination raised questions regarding conflict of interest after it was revealed that Steiner had (previous to his nomination by Annan) served as a judge on a panel that awarded the \$500,000 Dubai prize to Mr. Annan. The London-based *Financial Times* reported that the appointment "has prompted new questions about what standards should apply to senior U.N. officials to avoid conflicts of interest".

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The position was held for 17 years (1975–1992) by Dr. Mostafa Kamal Tolba, who was instrumental in bringing environmental considerations to the forefront of global thinking and action. Under his leadership, UNEP's most widely acclaimed success—the historic 1987 agreement to protect the ozone layer—the [Montreal Protocol](#) was negotiated.

During December 1972, the UN General Assembly unanimously elected Maurice Strong to head UNEP. Also Secretary General of both the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, which launched the world environment movement, and the 1992 Earth

Summit, Strong has played a critical role in globalizing the environmental movement.

## International years

The year 2007 was declared (International) Year of the Dolphin by the United Nations and UNEP.

The UN Convention on Migratory Species, together with its specialized agreements on dolphin conservation [ACCOBAMS](#) and [ASCOBANS](#) and the [Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society](#) (WDSCS) proposed 2007 as the [Year of the Dolphin](#) (YOD))

(International) Patron of the Year of the Dolphin is H.S.H. Prince Albert II of Monaco, with Special Ambassador to the cause being Nick Carter, of The Backstreet Boys. [1](#) [3](#) [1](#)

## Reports

UNEP publishes many reports, atlases and newsletters. For instance, the fourth Global Environment Outlook (GEO-4) assessment is a comprehensive report on environment, development and human well-being, providing analysis and information for policy makers and the concerned public. One of many points in the GEO-4 warns that we are living far beyond our means. It notes that the human population is now so large that the amount of resources needed to sustain it exceeds what is available. Humanity's environmental demand, or [ecological footprint](#), is 21.9 hectares per person while the Earth's biological capacity is, on average, only 15.7 ha/person.

## Reform

Main articles: [International Sustainable Energy Agency](#), UNEO, and IRENA

Following the publication of [Fourth Assessment Report](#) of the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) (IPCC) in February 2007, a "Paris Call for Action" read out by French President Jacques Chirac and supported by 46 countries, called for the United Nations Environment Programme to be replaced by a new and more powerful "United Nations Environment Organization (UNEO)", also called [Global Environment Organisation](#) now supported by French President Nicolas Sarkozy and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, to be modelled on the [World Health Organization](#). The 46 countries included the [European Union](#)

nations, but notably did not include the United States, Saudi Arabia, Russia, and China, the top four emitters of greenhouse gases.

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## Famous world projects

UNEP has sponsored the development of solar loan programs, with attractive return rates, to buffer the initial deployment costs and entice consumers to consider and purchase solar PV systems. The most famous example is the [solar loan program](#) sponsored by UNEP helping 100,000 people finance solar power systems in India.

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Success in India's solar program has led to similar projects in other parts of developing world like Tunisia, Morocco, Indonesia and Mexico.

UNEP sponsors the Marshlands project in Middle East that helps to protect the largest marshland in Middle East. In 2001, UNEP alerted the international community to the destruction of the Marshlands when it released satellite images showing that 90 percent of the Marshlands had already been lost. The UNEP "support for Environmental Management of the Iraqi Marshland" commenced in August 2004, in order to manage the Marshland area in an environmentally sound manner. [[6](#)]

In order to ensure full participation of global communities, UNEP works in an inclusive fashion that brings on board different societal cohorts. UNEP has a vibrant programme for young people known as Tunza. Within this program are other projects like the AEO for Youth.

## Glaciers shrinking

Glaciers are shrinking at record rates and many could disappear within decades, the U.N. Environment Programme said on March 16, 2008. The scientists measuring the health of almost 30 glaciers around the world found that ice loss reached record levels in 2006. On average, the glaciers shrank by 4.9 feet in 2006, the most recent year for which data are available. The most severe loss was recorded at Norway's Breidalblikkbrea glacier, which shrank 10.2 feet in 2006. Glaciers lost an average of about a foot of ice a year between 1980 and 1999. But since the turn of the millennium the average loss has increased to about 20 inches. [[7](#)]

## Electric vehicles

At the fifth Magdeburg Environmental Forum held from 3–4 July 2008, in Magdeburg, Germany, UNEP and car manufacturer Daimler called for the establishment of infrastructure for electric vehicles. At this international conference, 250 high-ranking representatives from industry, science, politics and non-government organizations discussed solutions for future road transportation under the motto of "Sustainable Mobility—the Post-2012 CO2 Agenda". [ 8 ]

### See also



### [Sustainable development portal](#)

- [Global warming](#)
- [International Renewable Energy Agency](#)
- [Melbourne Principles](#)
- [Timeline of environmental events](#)
- [UNEP/GRID-Arendal](#)
- [United Nations Billion Tree Campaign](#)
- [World Conservation Monitoring Centre](#)
- [Miss Earth Foundation](#)
- [2010 Biodiversity Indicators Partnership](#)
- [2010 International Year of Biodiversity](#)
- [UNEP GEO Data Portal](#)

### References

1. <sup>^</sup> United Nations Environment Programme (16 March 2006). "[Achim Steiner Elected New UNEP Executive Director](#)". Press release.  
<http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=471&ArticleID=5231&l=en>  
Retrieved June 16, 2010
2. <sup>^</sup> Staff Reporter of the Sun (May 1, 2006). "[After Awarding Annan \\$500,000, German Is Given Top U.N. Post](#)". *The New York Sun*.  
<http://www.nysun.com/foreign/after-awarding-annan-500000-german-is-given-top/31917/>  
Retrieved June 16, 2010

3. [^ Newswise Science News | Pop Superstar Nick Carter to Help Wild Dolphins and Oceans](#)

4. [^ Doyle, Alister \(2007-02-03\). "46 nations call for tougher U.N. environment role"](#) .  
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[http://today.reuters.com/news/articlenews.aspx?type=environment&storyID=2007-02-03T144510Z\\_01\\_L03357553\\_RTRIDST\\_0\\_DCBRIGHTS-GLOBALWARMING-APPEAL-DC.XML](http://today.reuters.com/news/articlenews.aspx?type=environment&storyID=2007-02-03T144510Z_01_L03357553_RTRIDST_0_DCBRIGHTS-GLOBALWARMING-APPEAL-DC.XML)

5. [^ Solar loan program in India](#)

6. [^ UNEP Marshland project in Middle East](#)

7. [^ U.N.: Glaciers shrinking at record rate](#)

8. [^ "UNEP and Daimler Call for Infrastructure for Electric and Fuel-cell Vehicles"](#) .

Climate-L.org. 4 July 2008

<http://climate-l.org/2008/07/11/unep-and-daimler-call-for-infrastructure-for-electric-and-fuel-cell-vehicles/>

. Retrieved June 16, 2010

## Further reading

- United Nations Environment Programme. "Natural Allies: UNEP and Civil Society." Nairobi: [United Nations Foundation](#) , 2004.
- Paul Berthoud, [A Professional Life Narrative](#) , 2008, worked with UNEP and offers testimony from the inside of the early years of the organization.

## External links

- [Official UNEP Website](#) .
- [UNEP Finance Initiative](#) .
- [Sustainable Energy Finance Initiative](#) (SEFI).
- [United Nations Environment Programme - World Conservation Monitoring Centre \(UNEP-WCMC\)](#) .
- [UNEP-Tongji Institute of Environment for Sustainable Development](#) .
- [UNEP/GRID-Europe](#) .
- [UNEP GEO Data Portal](#) .
- [Sindrom Kodok Pada Manusia \( \*Indonesia Language\* \)](#)
- [Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment](#)