



UNEP has a rich history assisting governments in obtaining **environmental information** for decision-making, enhancing global and regional environmental cooperation, developing and applying national and international environmental law, advancing national and regional implementation of environmental objectives, and bridging major groups and governments in policy development and implementation processes.

Introduction

Environmental governance at the national, regional and global levels is critical for the achievement of environmental sustainability. Strengthened environmental governance should be in place at all levels to respond quickly and effectively to emerging environmental challenges, and to address agreed environmental priorities. Actions are required:

- To support coherent international decision-making processes for environmental governance;
- To catalyze international efforts to pursue the implementation of internationally agreed objectives;
- To support regional, subregional and national environmental governance processes and institutions;
- To promote and support the environmental basis for sustainable development at the national level.

Consultative Group of Ministers or their High-Level Representatives on IEG - Governing Council Decision 25/4

The Consultative Group has been established by Governing Council decision 25/4. The Group is requested to present a set of options for improving international environmental governance

(IEG) to the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC/GMEF) at its eleventh special session, with a view to providing inputs to the United Nations General Assembly.

- [Draft Agenda for the meeting](#)
- [ED's Background Paper for the meeting](#)
- [The co-Chair's Summary the 'Belgrade Process' \(with annex\).](#)
- [The President's speaking notes from the opening session.](#)
- [The Executive Director's speaking notes from the opening session.](#)
- [The Executive Director's powerpoint presentation from the meeting](#) - (including a possible new way of depicting the three pillars of sustainable development).

Actors

Governments, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, major groups, the private sector and civil society, individually or collectively, have a role in environmental governance. At the international level, multilateral environmental agreements have been increasingly playing an important role. Regional organizations and bodies provide forums for policy development and implementation in regions. The scientific community has a specific role in providing a basis for scientifically sound and informed decision-making.

UN system organizations and coordinating mechanisms (including the Chief Executives Board, Environmental Management Group, and the UN Development Group) each play an important role in formulating policies relating to environmental governance. At the national level, UN country teams and various UN agencies implement environment-related policies.

UNEP is the principal body of the UN in the field of the environment. UNEP's role is to be the leading global environmental authority. This includes setting the global environmental agenda, promoting the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and serving as an authoritative advocate for the global environment. UNEP works with relevant actors to enhance environmental governance by bridging science and policies, catalyzing the development and implementation of environmental policies and instruments, and supporting efforts of Governments to implement agreed environmental goals and objectives.

Science

For informed decision-making in environmental governance processes, scientific findings on the status of the environment should be regularly brought to policy forums where environmental agenda is set. One of UNEP's main functions since its inception at the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment in 1972 is to keep under review the world environmental situation, as mandated by UN General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII). By carrying out this function, UNEP is to ensure that emerging environmental problems of wide international significance receive appropriate and adequate considerations by Governments.

Human-induced environmental change has accelerated over the last three decades, as is clearly illustrated in UNEP's flagship Global Environment Outlook (GEO) series of reports and other assessments such as the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005). The increasing complexity of environmental degradation now requires an enhanced capacity for scientific assessment, monitoring and early warning. For this reason UNEP's Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC/GMEF) has initiated a consultative process to identify gaps and needs in the current assessment structure, and the means to address them (<http://www.unep.org/scienceinitiative/>).

Key scientific resources in relation to environmental governance include:

- [UNEP Year Book 2009 - Environmental Governance](#)
- [UNEP Global Assessments](#)
- [Regional/National Assessments](#)
- [Urban/Ecosystem Assessments](#)

Policy

As the principal body of the United Nations in the field of the environment, UNEP has been mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 15 December 1972:

- To promote international cooperation in the field of the environment;
- To provide general policy guidance for the direction and coordination of environmental programmes within the United Nations system;
- To review the implementation of environmental programmes within the United Nations system;
- To keep under review the world environmental situation;
- To promote the contribution of relevant international scientific and other professional communities;
- To exchange environmental knowledge and information on technical aspects of

formulation and implementation of environmental programmes within the United Nations system.

In accordance with these mandates, as underscored by the Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme, the role of UNEP is to be the leading global environmental authority and in that role to set the global environmental agenda, to promote the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and to serve as an authoritative advocate for the global environment.

UNEP has been fulfilling this role since 1972 by:

- Bridging science and policy through environmental monitoring, assessments and information;
- Providing international platforms to facilitate policy debate, negotiations and decision-making;
- Facilitating the development of environmental law;
- Providing assistance to Member States in strengthening their national, subregional and regional policies, laws and institutions;
- Enhancing cooperation among States and various non-State actors to address environmental issues of common concerns collectively.

In particular, the combination of UNEP normative functions at the global level, its regional coordinating functions and its catalytic operational activities at the national level enables UNEP to advance environmental policy coherence at all levels.

Through the implementation of decision SS.VII/1 on international environmental governance adopted by the UNEP Governing Council in Cartagena, Colombia in February 2002, UNEP contributes to international efforts aimed at strengthening international environmental governance. UNEP's work in the field of environmental governance is built upon Governing Council decision SS.VII/1.

Methodology

In the field of environmental law, from 1982 to date, UNEP environmental law activities have been organized and coordinated through a series of 10-year programmes for the development and periodic review of environmental law.

- [Montevideo Programme I](#)
- [Montevideo Programme II](#)
- [Montevideo Programme III](#)
- [Montevideo Programme IV](#)

UNEP's primary work in the field of environmental governance is:

To support coherent international decision-making processes for environmental governance:

- Assist the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum to promote international cooperation in the field of environment and set the global environmental agenda.
- Keep the state of the environment under review on a regular basis through authoritative assessment processes and identify emerging issues in order to support sound science-based decision-making at the national and international levels.
- Cooperate with multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), and support for collaboration among them for their effective implementation, respecting the mandate of each entity, as well as partnering with the governing bodies and secretariats of other intergovernmental processes to enhance mutually supportive regimes between the environment and other related fields.
- Provide support and policy inputs on environmental governance to the Chief Executives Board for Coordination and other inter agency forums and will make use of the Environment Management Group to promote joint action by all agencies and multilateral environmental agreement secretariats.

To catalyze international efforts to pursue the implementation of internationally agreed objectives,

UNEP will support efforts to promote the further development and implementation of international environmental law, norms and standards, in particular those addressing the goals, targets and commitments identified in the outcomes of United Nations summits and conferences, especially through the implementation of the Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law (Montevideo Programme).

- Providing leadership to the progressive development of international and national

environmental law ;

- Provide advisory services and technical assistance to developing countries and countries with economies in transition upon request to develop and/or strengthen environmental policy, legislation and institutional regimes;
- Legal support in processes for developing international legal instruments including further development of legal regimes within existing MEAs;
- Capacity building in the form of national, or regional or global training and sensitization programmes for stakeholders of environmental law to strengthen the institutional framework for enhancing development, implementation of national as well as international environmental law (Government Officials, Judges, Magistrates, Legal practitioners, Parliaments, Prosecutors, Judicial Training Institutes, Legal NGOs, the Academia).
- Undertaking studies to develop norms in national and international environmental law as well as policy and institutions.
- Promote wider appreciation of environmental law through the preparation and dissemination of online and hard copy environmental law information including publications for various legal stakeholders;
- Building partnerships with national, regional and global international partners to enhance the application of international environmental law.
- Provide assistance to countries who are Parties to MEAs on effective compliance with, enforcement of and implementation of MEAs at global, regional and national levels
- Support, build and strengthen capacity building and training programs to assist national and regional negotiators and MEAs focal points enhance their skills and prepare them to participate effectively in multilateral environmental negotiations and intergovernmental meetings, such as conference/meetings of parties, etc.
- Develop and prepare relevant technical, legal and policy papers, tools, guidelines and handbooks for effective development, enforcement and implementation of environmental policies and laws including MEAs.
- Support the development of mechanisms and knowledge management for the coherent implementation of specific clusters of or specific common issues under MEAs
- Assist in creating knowledge base that will improve access to information and increase public awareness on how to adopt sound environmental legislation, and in recognizing and sharing best practices

To support regional, subregional and national environmental governance processes and institutions :

Support regional ministerial and other intergovernmental forums related to the environment and assist in the implementation of their programmes of action.

- Support the efforts of Governments to further develop and strengthen their national, subregional and regional policies, laws and institutions underpinning environmental governance,

and infrastructures for environmental management.

- Support the efforts of Governments to develop and strengthen their capacity for environmental data and knowledge management and assessment at the national, subregional and regional levels in order to provide a sound basis for environmental governance.
- Strengthen its support for the engagement of non governmental stakeholders and civil society in environmental governance at all levels.

To promote and support the environmental basis for sustainable development at the national level:

- Support Governments in mainstreaming environment into their development policy processes, including through the UNEP-UNDP Poverty and Environment Initiative.
- Assist Governments to ensure that environmental considerations are incorporated into their national development plans, including by making full use of the United Nations Development Group platform.
- Enhance its strategic presence in regions to support Governments and United Nations country teams in addressing environmental governance.
- Strengthen its engagement with other specialized agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, as well as departments and regional partners.