

# GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT OUTLOOK

*"for life on Earth"*



UNEP

United Nations Environment Programme

# Global Environment Outlook

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# Global Environment Outlook



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## Foreword

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is proud and pleased to present the first report in the Global Environment Outlook (GEO) series.

This groundbreaking report presents information on the state of the global environment. It indicates that world-wide, profound changes continue to occur in social, institutional and economic systems. It reports on the continued impoverishment of large parts of the global population. It points to the increased disparities both within and between nations. It describes the environmental implications of rapid globalization, particularly through developments in information technology, transport and trade regimes. It shows us that significant progress has been made in confronting environmental challenges at the local, national, and regional level. In the end, though, *GEO-1* concludes that, during the past decade, the environment has continued to degrade and significant problems still persist.

If there is one conclusion to be drawn from *GEO-1*, it is that despite progress, the pace at which the world is moving toward a sustainable future is simply too slow. Internationally and nationally, the funds and political will dedicated to halting further global environmental degradation are insufficient. We know that the knowledge and technological base to solve the most pressing environmental issues are available. However, the sense of urgency of the early 1990s

early warning system, and to support informed decision-making at all levels of society.

Since the Rio Conference in 1992, UNEP has broadened its scientific focus to better address the information requirements of international environmental policy setting and to help bridge the gap between scientific understanding and societal action. The GEO series places high priority on reflecting regional perceptions and realities, while at the same time reporting on the status of the global environment.

*GEO-1* is designed to build consensus on critical environmental issues, setting priorities among the plethora of environmental concerns, and identifying issues that the international community needs to address. *GEO-1* addresses regional policy responses and explores the possible future state of the global environment using a scenario of the future in which no major policy or structural changes would be implemented—an unlikely scenario indeed, and one which, we hope, the GEO report will help to divert.

In a single volume, and with a production time of slightly more than one year, not every environmental issue in every region can be covered in great detail. *GEO-1*, thus, should not be read as a comprehensive work on the state of the environment in a specific region. Rather, it should give the reader—whether a policy maker, a corporate leader,

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