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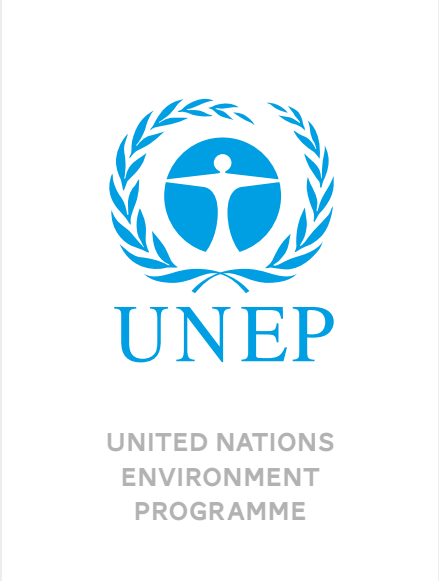
# MEDIUM TERM STRATEGY

2014-2017



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MEDIUM TERM STRATEGY 2014–2017



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
DfID-UK	United Kingdom Department for International Development
EA	Expected Accomplishment
EMG	Environment Management Group
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GC	Governing Council
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEO	Global Environment Outlook
IOMC	Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals
IPBES	Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPSAS	International Public Sector Accounting Standards
IRP	International Resource Panel
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
MOPAN	Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network
MTS	Medium-Term Strategy
OIOS	United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services
PIMS	Programme Information Management System
POPs	Persistent Organic Pollutants
PoW	Programme of Work
RCM	Regional Coordination Mechanism
REDD	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
SAICM	Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management
UN	United Nations
UNCT	UN Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDG	UN Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WHO	World Health Organization



## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

By 2017, five years will have passed since the General Assembly decided, in its resolution 67/213 of 21 December 2012, that the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) should be strengthened and upgraded, in accordance with the recommendation of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), “The future we want”<sup>1</sup>. At that time, Member States will be able to observe the changes in the global environment and the economy that a strengthened and upgraded UNEP can claim as the result of its efforts.

The UNEP medium-term strategy for the period 2014–2017 plots the direction that UNEP will take in pursuit of that goal. It lays out the vision, strategic objectives and the results which UNEP aims to achieve by 2017. Key to successful attainment of these results will be work by UNEP with stakeholders with very different needs and priorities across multiple sectors of government and society, to enable them better to manage the environment and thereby safeguard the services that it provides for their countries’ development and economy, which are crucial to the eradication of poverty and the well-being of their populations.

The business model employed by UNEP in pursuit of its planned results is to work through partnerships. UNEP aims to use partnerships as an opportunity to expand its reach and to leverage an impact much greater than it would be able to achieve on its own. The UNEP business model is also contingent on UNEP taking a leadership role in coordinating environmental matters within the United Nations system, in order to maximize impact by working in a more strategic and coordinated manner with partners in the United Nations system and the secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements.

In determining its focus for the period 2014–2017, UNEP employed what was termed a “foresight process” and the findings of the fifth report in its Global Environment Outlook series (GEO-5) to identify global challenges that the world is likely to witness during this period. In that process, UNEP weighed the most pressing global environmental challenges against the priorities of regions and those emanating from multilateral environmental agreements, and arrived at the following focus areas for the organization: climate change; disasters and conflicts; ecosystem management; environmental governance; chemicals and waste; resource efficiency; and environment under review. The medium-term strategy is articulated around the support which UNEP provides to interested countries and partners, to assist them in understanding the concept of the green economy and its role in sustainable development and poverty eradication across all UNEP focus areas, with the aim of integrating environmental considerations into all economic and social agendas.

In each of the UNEP focus areas, the medium-term strategy lays out the results that UNEP aims to achieve, ensuring that the organization’s work is commensurate with the targeted changes. At the operational level, the medium-term strategy follows a deepened approach to results-based management. All planning and delivery efforts within the organization – from programme planning, human and financial resource mobilization, allocation and management to partnership management, monitoring and evaluation – will be strengthened to ensure that they have mutually reinforcing objectives that enable UNEP to deliver its services better and to achieve the projected results.

<sup>1</sup> General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex, para. 88.





*Our products and services give us a broad array of tools to catalyse change in response to demand.*

UNEP is the lead organization to coordinate environmental matters within the United Nations system. We produce environmental assessments and analyses, norms, guidelines and methods for use by stakeholders looking for guidance on how to effectively manage the environment for their sustainable development and economic growth. With a global remit, yet only 1000 staff and a biennial operating budget in recent years of about US\$ 500 million, our ability to achieve significant impact is based on partnerships—integral to the organization’s strategy to place environment and sustainable development, at the heart of everything we do.

*We are committed to strengthening our operations to enforce results-based management.*

*We partner with United Nations sister agencies, secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements and other strategically placed institutions, driven by the potential impact leveraged from each opportunity.*

## II. INTRODUCTION

In 2017, UNEP will celebrate its forty-fifth birthday. That will be an occasion to reflect on what UNEP should have achieved by that stage and, by extension, on what UNEP, the member States and its secretariat, should focus on over the years leading up to 2017 in order to achieve those planned results. In February 2011, in paragraph 23 of its decision 26/9, the UNEP Governing Council requested the Executive Director to prepare for its twenty-seventh session in February 2013 a medium-term strategy for the period 2014–2017 with a vision, objectives, priorities, impact measures and a mechanism for review by Governments. The strategy is designed to guide the organization's work over the four-year period, with a view to achieving measurable results that UNEP plans jointly with Governments, partners and other stakeholders.

What UNEP should achieve by 2017 is inextricably linked to the state of the global environment and the economy at that time, to the way in which people perceive the environment and manage the services that it provides for human well-being and thus for poverty eradication. Notwithstanding the uncertainties surrounding these questions, the global environmental outlook process has provided a scenario based on current trends and projections that guides the focus of the medium-term strategy.

Assessing demands for services from its stakeholders will be critical in ensuring that UNEP is responsive and client-driven. The goal which UNEP pursues will also be determined by its mandate and by an informed decision as to whether others might be better placed to respond, if necessary with UNEP guidance and support, or whether UNEP has the comparative strength to provide the best service itself. This medium-term strategy provides the guidance which UNEP will follow in focusing its efforts.

Midway through the implementation of the 2010–2013 medium-term strategy, UNEP conducted a lessons-learned exercise. It had institutionalized a results-based management approach, where performance is measured on a regular basis, and had also institutionalized evaluation as an independent function of the organization, to provide regular feedback on the design, relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of its work. Complementing its own internal review mechanisms, UNEP also benefited from reviews by the Office for Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and the United Nations Board of Auditors, as well as from external evaluations conducted by such bodies as the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN). These all helped identify where the organization could best strengthen the design and management of its programme. These lessons have been critical in guiding the development of the UNEP medium-term strategy for 2014–2017.

The 2014–2017 strategy consolidates past achievements, with a view to catalysing a process of change to ensure an improved human well-being that is more environmentally sustainable and that contributes to poverty eradication. The strategy also takes on board the global environmental priorities identified by the multilateral environmental agreements, including the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, which provide a flexible framework for all stakeholders. At the same time, it reflects the provisions of General Assembly resolution 66/288 on the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and is therefore designed to enable UNEP to harness the following opportunities:

- (a) To leverage further impact by maximizing the use of strategic partnerships, capitalizing on mutually supportive mandates and programmes and taking advantage of the lead role played by UNEP in the United Nations system in coordinating environmental issues and of the strategic presence of UNEP at regional and country level;

- (b) To better serve the priorities of multilateral environmental agreements for the benefit of their parties, given that UNEP provides the secretariat for many such agreements;
- (c) To continue to explore the potential of an inclusive approach to greening economies as a pathway to sustainable development;
- (d) To achieve organizational excellence in UNEP by strengthening results-based management in a comprehensive fashion that integrates organizational risk management.

As the lead organization in coordinating environmental matters within the United Nations system, UNEP produces environmental assessments and analyses, norms, guidelines and methods for use by stakeholders seeking guidance on how effectively to manage the environment for their sustainable development and economic growth. Although its remit is global in scope, UNEP operates with a staff complement of only some 1,000 and a biennial budget in recent years of some \$500 million. Accordingly, its ability to achieve a significant impact is based on partnerships – integral to the organization's strategy to place environment and sustainable development at the heart of everything that it does.

The products and services provided by UNEP represent a broad array of tools designed to catalyse change in response to demand. In that process, UNEP forges partnerships with United Nations sister agencies, secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements and other strategically placed institutions, driven by the potential impact leveraged from each opportunity, and is committed to strengthening its operations to enforce results-based management.

## III. EMERGING ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION IN 2014–2017

Twenty years after the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development – the Earth Summit – in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, changes to the global environment continue at a rate unprecedented in human history. Data gathered for GEO-5 show that moderate success has been achieved in slowing the rate or extent of change – including through enhanced resource efficiency and mitigation measures – but this has not reversed environmental degradation. Overall, neither the scope nor the speed of change has abated in recent years.

As human pressures on the Earth's systems accelerate, several critical global, regional and local thresholds have already been exceeded or are close to being exceeded. Once these thresholds are crossed, abrupt and possibly irreversible changes to the life-support functions of the planet are likely to occur, with significant adverse implications for human well-being. The resulting complex and non-linear changes in the Earth's systems are already having serious impacts on human well-being. These include:

- Increases in average temperatures above threshold levels in some places, leading to significant human health impacts;
- Increased frequency and severity of climatic events, such as floods and droughts, affecting both natural assets and human security;
- Accelerating temperature changes and sea-level rise, affecting human well-being in some places, particularly in coastal communities and small island developing States;

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- Substantial biodiversity loss and the continuing extinction of species, affecting the provision of ecosystem services, with such consequences as the collapse of fisheries or the loss of species used for medicinal purposes.

Through a comprehensive foresight process involving a dedicated panel and over 400 leading scientists and experts from around the world, UNEP has identified emerging issues, defined as issues with global environmental impact that are recognized by the scientific community as very important to human well-being, but have not yet received adequate attention from the policy community,<sup>2</sup> which include:

- (a) Ensuring food safety and food security for 9 billion people: new challenges. Emerging challenges for food security include competition from bioenergy production, diminishing phosphorus supplies and increasing water scarcity. There is an urgent need to increase the safety and security of the world's food supply by improving the food-processing pathway, reducing food waste and boosting agricultural efficiency. The task faced by the 2014–2017 medium-term strategy is to fill the gaps in environmental sustainability by leveraging the best available science and collaborating effectively with United Nations agencies and other bodies playing a leading role in the field of food security. It also aims to promote a resource-efficiency approach across the supply chain, with a view to decoupling food production from environmental impact and thereby helping to increase food security and to promote poverty eradication;
- (b) Climate change mitigation and adaptation: managing the consequences. Climate change could have immediate and unprecedented implications for human populations in such matters as where they can settle, grow food, maintain built infrastructure or rely on functioning ecosystems. Emissions continue to rise and pledges of future action within the process launched by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change currently fall short of the minimum level which, scientists maintain, is necessary to keep the increase in temperature below 2° C. The potential disruption and displacement and the need to adapt to phenomena such as sea-level rise or extreme weather events represent a profound challenge to sustainable development and can reverse hard-won development gains, including those from poverty eradication measures. The 2014–2017 medium-term strategy will promote innovative approaches to environmentally friendly adaptation, particularly ecosystem-based approaches
- (c) New insights into water-land interactions: shift in the management paradigm. Recent scientific research has generated a better understanding of how water and land interact, including, for example, how changes in land-use affect downwind rainfall patterns. This new knowledge has important implications for the manner in which we manage water and land to ensure the maintenance of minimum ecological flows, and provides new impetus for efforts to boost water-use efficiency and to improve the integration of water and land management. The 2014–2017 medium-term strategy will adopt a more integrated approach to land and water management, and aim at developing options for increased water efficiency;
- (d) Going beyond mere conservation: integrating biodiversity across the ecological and economic agendas. In recent years, two important threads of research have documented how biodiversity is intertwined with development, quality of life, human well-being and nature: one thread articulates the linkages between biodiversity and other ecological issues, and the other explores the interrelationship between biodiversity and economics. It is now time to fully integrate the issue of biodiversity into the global ecological and economic agendas, while continuing to support biodiversity conservation, and integrating biodiversity across ecological and economic activities. While UNEP will continue to support biodiversity conservation

<sup>2</sup> 21 Issues for the 21st Century: Result of the UNEP Foresight Process on Emerging Environmental Issues (UNEP, 2012), Foreword, p. iv.

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and the involvement of local communities, bringing their traditional knowledge, the 2014–2017 medium-term strategy will move further forward in integrating biodiversity across ecological and economic agendas, tackling such problems as invasive species and living modified organisms which pose a threat to the conservation of biodiversity and the maintenance of ecosystem services;

- (e) Need to minimize the risks of chemicals and wastes. Societies continue to experience the harmful consequences of unsound chemicals management. This situation reflects the need for comprehensive assessment and management aimed at minimizing significant short or long-term risks to society and nature. The 2014–2017 medium-term strategy will therefore focus on working with partners and countries to manage chemicals and wastes in an integrated manner, through assessments, monitoring, guidance on best use, management and disposal to catalyse transformative change;
- (f) Accelerating the implementation of environmentally friendly renewable energy systems. The large potential for renewable energy has not yet been realized, because of the many barriers obstructing the use of such energy worldwide. It is critical that means of removing economic, regulatory and institutional barriers are identified and that enabling conditions are created that make renewable energy competitive in comparison to other conventional sources. The 2014–2017 medium-term strategy will entail a stronger focus on leveraging best science for catalysing the transformation towards renewable energy, while continuing to cover energy efficiency and emission reduction.

The foresight process also identified emerging issues that cut across environmental themes:

- Aligning governance structures to the challenges of global sustainability and, in particular, to integrate social, environmental and economic objectives in sustainable development policies at all levels of governance;
- Transforming human capabilities to meet global environmental challenges and move towards a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication;
- Reconnecting scientific knowledge and policymaking;
- Catalysing rapid and transformative change in human behaviour affecting the environment.

These issues correspond to the priorities identified in General Assembly resolution 66/288. As UNEP increases its efforts to bring coherence and synergy to the manner in which the United Nations system addresses environmental issues, the organization will also integrate governance-related activities within all its subprogrammes in the 2014–2017 medium-term strategy, taking into account the links between national, provincial and local levels. Through the medium-term strategy, UNEP will integrate green economy approaches in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication across the organization, while ensuring coherence across the subprogrammes through the subprogramme on resource efficiency. The proposed new subprogramme on environment under review aims to leverage information as an agent of change and ensure a coherent approach in dealing with the science-policy interface. UNEP work relating to scientific panels such as the International Resource Panel, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is intended to strengthen the bridge between science and policy.

Within the 2014–2017 medium-term strategy, UNEP will also support the application of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration to enhance the capacities of countries to generate, have access to, analyse, use and communicate environmental information and knowledge to work towards a better informed society. UNEP will also help



enable countries to achieve key international goals and plans, such as the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets, adopted by Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, working in consultation with the relevant multilateral environmental agreement secretariats. UNEP work on sustainable consumption will contribute to addressing the issue of changes in human behaviour.

The findings of the foresight process and of the International Resource Panel, through its reports on such issues as “decoupling” and “impacts”, together with the priorities identified in General Assembly resolution 66/288, have provided an important framework for prioritizing action by UNEP itself, which will provide the framework within which the organization will strengthen coordination and synergy in the United Nations system on environmental issues. Within this framework, the specific needs of countries and regions drive the strategic focus for the 2014–2017 medium-term strategy. Thus, globally significant issues and regional and national priorities all contribute to the medium-term strategy, taking into account the comparative advantages of UNEP and the needs and potential of its regional offices.

UNEP also sought the views of the secretariats of the multilateral environmental agreements and of United Nations sister agencies, to ensure that its strategic focus is client-oriented. Concerns have been raised over the growing gap between environmental commitments and obligations under the agreements and their implementation. In particular, the secretariats of the agreements identified opportunities for UNEP to support the implementation of the agreements where UNEP had a comparative advantage through such efforts as systematic or generic capacity-building, which could lay the foundation for specialized and more effective capacity-building directed at the implementation of the multilateral environmental agreements.

The medium-term strategy also includes supporting countries in integrating multilateral environmental agreement-related priorities into national planning processes such as the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and other national planning exercises; incorporating multilateral environmental agreement priorities into capacity-building efforts through such measures as raising environmental awareness among the judiciaries; and supporting system-wide knowledge management through the multilateral environmental agreement information and knowledge management initiative and other cooperative mechanisms under the UNEP environmental governance subprogramme. The medium-term strategy also envisages the provision of support by UNEP to countries in gaining access to finance from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Adaptation Fund under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol, to implement the multilateral environmental agreements in those areas of work that are eligible for GEF support.

## IV. UNEP INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT: 2010–2013 MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGY

An understanding of what UNEP has been able to achieve and the lessons learned to date from the implementation of the current medium-term strategy, for 2010–2013, are critical in enabling the organization to build on its strengths and to analyse challenges and opportunities for a stronger engagement in the future.

### A SNAPSHOT OF PROGRAMMATIC ACHIEVEMENTS

The first biennium of the current medium-term strategy period marked a new strategic and transformational direction for UNEP as it began implementing its medium-term strategy for 2010–2013 along six axes: climate change; disasters and conflicts; ecosystem management; environmental governance; harmful substances and hazardous waste; and resource efficiency and sustainable consumption and production.

TABLE 1: UNEP OPERATING BUDGET: 2010–2011 (Millions of United States dollars)

Funding source	Environment Fund	United Nations regular budget	Extrabudgetary sources
Approved budget	180	14	228
Income received in 2010–2011	163	14	268
Expenditure	165	14	250

UNEP has been implementing the 2010–2013 medium-term strategy through its 2010–2011 programme of work and, from January 2012, the 2012–2013 programme of work. The UNEP programme of work is implemented through a portfolio of 115 projects implemented with a wide variety of partners worldwide. With an operating budget of \$415 million from its Environment Fund, the United Nations regular budget and extrabudgetary sources in trust funds and earmarked contributions, UNEP has achieved significant results at the half-way stage in the implementation of the 2010–2103 medium-term strategy, despite the global financial crisis. These results are briefly illustrated in the following text-boxes, representing snapshots of its achievements in various sectors.

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