



International Environmental Governance: Implementing Reform

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International Environmental Governance: Implementing Reform

by Maria Ivanova

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List of Participants

Governments

Florian Gubler, Deputy Permanent Representative, Embassy of Switzerland
in Nairobi

Anastasia Guretskaya, Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation
and Nuclear Safety, Germany

H.E. Abdoul Wahab Haidara, Ambassador and Permanent Representative,
Embassy of the Republic of Senegal in Nairobi

Sebastian König, Federal Office for the Environment, Switzerland

Vladimir Lenev, Deputy Permanent Representative, Embassy of the Russian
Federation in Nairobi

Johanna Lissinger Peitz, Ministry of the Environment and Energy, Sweden

Matthias-Leonhard Maier, Directorate General for the Environment, European
Commission

John Matuszak, Department of State, United States

H.E. John Moreti, High Commissioner and Permanent Representative of Botswana
in Nairobi

Rungnapar Pattanavibool, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Thailand

H.E. Franz Perrez, Ambassador, Federal Office for the Environment, Switzerland

Wang Qian, Ministry of Environmental Protection, China

Lucy Richardson, Permanent Mission of New Zealand to the United Nations
in Geneva

Tuulia Toikka, Ministry of the Environment, Finland

Claudia Vasquez Marazzani, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Colombia

Felix Wertli, Federal Office for the Environment, Switzerland

Other institutions

Anna Dubrova, University of Massachusetts Boston

Natalia Escobar-Pemberthy, University of Massachusetts Boston

Hossein Fadaei, UN Environment Management Group

Maria Ivanova, University of Massachusetts Boston

Mamadou Kane, UN Environment Programme

Elizabeth Mrema, UN Environment Programme

Rolph Payet, Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions Secretariat

Jannica Pitkanen, UN Environment Management Group

Kerstin Stendahl, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

Hyun Sung, UN Environment Programme

Overview

On June 20–22, 2017, the Federal Office of Environment of Switzerland convened a workshop on International Environmental Governance (IEG) in Glion, Switzerland. The event brought together 22 participants from 13 countries and the EU Commission, as well as from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), UN Environment Management Group (EMG), and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Officials from capitals and members of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) in Nairobi or Geneva also took part in the workshop. Maria Ivanova, professor and global governance expert from the University of Massachusetts Boston, moderated the discussion. She prepared the background materials for the workshop and is the author of this report. The dialogue built on the outcomes of an expert workshop on “Achieving Environmental Sustainability for Sustainable Development” that UNEP convened in New York on July 21–22, 2016.

Objectives and Summary

This international workshop on international environmental governance was a meeting driven by member states with the aim of identifying areas in IEG that require further attention and proposing options to move forward in supporting international environmental governance. The objectives were as follows:

1. Review progress on the mandates since Rio+20 and evaluate the current status of IEG, and identify key actors and their roles in IEG;
2. Outline opportunities for unlocking the potential of UNEP, the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA), and the multilateral environmental agreements, and identify ways to overcome governance hurdles;
3. Develop and evaluate options for integrating and implementing the environmental dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The meeting took place under Chatham House rules, and participants spoke in their personal capacity. The aim was to elaborate a range of areas that need further attention or discussions in a space with open and frank deliberations. This report presents the main elements in the core areas and identifies where additional discussion or analysis is required. It does not reflect a common view as not all participants agreed on each of the areas of attention.

Deliberations focused on the status of current governance processes and structures; the relationship between UNEP, UNEA, and the CPR; the role of UNEP in the creation of the environmental conventions in their administrative support

and implementation; and UNEP’s role in advancing the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Four areas for further attention emerged:

- Function and interplay of UNEP governing bodies, including UNEA and the CPR
- UNEP’s functioning and operation, including the following:
 - Science and science-policy function
 - Policy and normative function
 - Supportive and catalytic function
- UNEP’s relationship with multilateral environmental agreements
- UNEP’s role in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Function and Interplay of UNEP Governing Bodies

Background

Created as a subsidiary body of the United Nations through Resolution 2997 in 1972, the United Nations Environment Programme was to be governed by a 58-member Governing Council. As a result of the institutional reforms initiated at Rio+20, the UNEP Governing Council transformed into the universal UN Environment Assembly. This ensures that all member states can engage in decision making, according decisions greater legitimacy. The change was also geared toward granting UNEP greater legitimacy with the multilateral environmental agreements, also known as global environmental conventions, since their membership is universal. Universality now accords the UN Environment Assembly greater authority to provide overarching policy guidance and engage with the governing bodies of the conventions. Ultimately, the assembly is a political forum. It will convene biannually in Nairobi and provide a platform for the exchange of experience, knowledge, and best practices. It holds the potential for bringing countries together around common concerns and innovative solutions and sets the global environmental agenda.

Historically, UNEP’s Governing Council began with an annual cycle of meetings. In 1987, a biennial meeting cycle was introduced, but governments met in special sessions of the Governing Council in the interim years beginning in 1988. In 1997, governments established the High-Level Committee of Ministers and Officials (HLCMO) as a subsidiary body and intersessional mechanism for the Governing Council, and in 1999, through UN General Assembly resolution 53/242, they instituted the Global Ministerial Environment Forum as an “annual, ministerial-level, global environmental forum” that would take the form of a special session of the Governing Council in alternate years to the regular Governing Council

session. Special sessions convened around the world, and regular sessions were held in Nairobi. The experience of the Global Ministerial Environment Forum might be useful as governments consider operational options for the UN Environment Assembly and its intersessional mechanism.

Governance during the intersessional periods of the Governing Council was to be carried out by the Committee of Permanent Representatives, which governments created in 1985 to establish a formal and regular system of consultation among member states and with the Executive Director. This mechanism was formally established as a subsidiary organ of the Governing Council by Governing Council Decision 13/2 and now functions as a subsidiary organ of the UN Environment Assembly. The CPR comprises 118 members, 81 of whom are based in Nairobi at their country's permanent mission. The rest of the permanent representatives accredited to UNEP are based in other locations—Addis Ababa, Geneva, or New York—or operate from their home countries. The responsibilities of the committee include review of UNEP's draft programme of work and budget, monitoring the implementation of Governing Council decisions and now of UNEA resolutions.

Discussion

Participants discussed two main challenges the Committee of Permanent Representatives faces: representation and engagement. Many countries are not represented in the CPR as only 40 percent of all UN member states have missions in Nairobi: 54 percent of developed countries and 36 percent of developing countries.¹ For example, the Latin America and Caribbean group (GRULAC) has minimal presence in Nairobi with only 7 out of 33 GRULAC countries formally represented—Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, and Venezuela. This limited representation diminishes the ability of many member states to fully participate and engage in UNEA in Nairobi, but governments are appointing representatives and focal points to rectify this concern.

Reform of the core governance mechanisms requires a series of functional and operational adjustments and clarifications. Given the importance of the governance responsibilities of UNEA and the CPR, participants noted that it is important to align membership, ensure communication, and facilitate improved understanding of priorities, constraints, and opportunities. They identified several potential areas of attention, including clarification of the mandates of the governing bodies, of the functions and roles of the UNEA Bureau and the CPR Bureau, and of the process of preparing UNEA resolutions, including the role

and function of the open-ended CPR. To avoid overlaps, it is critical to clarify responsibilities, define distinctive mandates, and create functional coordination mechanisms. The effective operation of the bodies requires further deliberation and action, including the scheduling and location of the different meetings.

Ultimately, the respective Rules of Procedure of UNEA and the mandate of the CPR and the open-ended CPR need a clear definition, and the relationship between the bodies has to be articulated. Participants highlighted concerns about the membership structures of the governing bodies. While the assembly is now universal, its intersessional mechanism, the CPR, is not, and greater efforts are needed to enable countries to engage in the CPR. In addition, the governing bodies need to improve their accountability and visibility. Participation and engagement of stakeholders should also be enhanced and their input considered. However, further discussion is required for an agreement on how to improve stakeholder involvement. Participants noted that the United Nations system was not designed for engagement from the private sector, and improved mechanisms to attract such participation and engagement are required.

UN Environment Assembly

The UN Environment Assembly plays an important dual role. It is the political platform for global environmental governance and is expected to focus political attention, provide policy guidance, and motivate political will and action. It also provides the main scenario for member states to interact with UNEP, provide a vision and guidance, and learn about its achievements and challenges. To better deliver on both of these roles, some critical changes are needed in the way the assembly functions.

Participants noted that UNEA has to be more active and show its value added. They suggested that the preparatory process be designed in a way that provides an opportunity for capitals to submit timely input as well as for the conferences of the parties of the MEAs to contribute to UNEA resolutions. Special sessions could be convened for advancing thematic issues and could be held in cities around the world (as with the special sessions of the UNEP Governing Council), which would enable many countries to participate more fully and create a greater sense of ownership among member states.

Resolutions are a core outcome of UN Environment Assembly deliberations. An agreement is necessary on whether they should be political or technical, and what their optimal number should be. Once the resolutions have been

¹In contrast, 94 percent of UN member states are represented in New York and 62 percent in Geneva. Representation of developing countries is at 95 and 55 percent in New York and Geneva, respectively.

defined, it is important to determine how they should reflect in the actions of UNEP and its member states. Articulating and agreeing on UNEP's role in the implementation of the resolutions is critical given UNEP's core mandate, its limited resources, and its capacity to carry out the program of work and budget and the medium-term strategy that member states have approved.

Universal membership was a main goal of the Rio+20 reforms of UNEP's governing bodies. However, universal membership presents a number of challenges. The new universal UN Environment Assembly cannot operate in the same manner as the Governing Council it replaced. Participation of member states is still far from universal as there are countries that cannot invest much effort into UNEA. The question, therefore, is whether UNEA would require more states to participate physically or if it would allow countries to participate to the extent of their capacity and interest and through alternative modes. Possible engagement options include the regular convening of regional ministerial forums where multiple country interests could be articulated and embedded into a common position. Another option is remote participation in UNEA via the Internet and the ability to comment on resolutions online.

Member states called for the process to be better organized, with enough time allowed for countries not represented in Nairobi to provide input through the open-ended CPR. Participants also noted the need for adequate allotment of negotiating time during UNEA meetings to avoid the problems of eliminating the speaking slots for some delegations and the need for clear agreement that heads of delegation—regardless of their ministerial status—be allowed to speak on behalf of the member state they represent.

Committee of Permanent Representatives

The Committee of Permanent Representatives is the only UNEP governance body that is physically located in Nairobi and has regular and consistent interaction with UNEP. In light of the governance reforms, however, the CPR mandate, role, and value added would benefit from rearticulation and confirmation. Participants suggested that the CPR mandate should focus on the oversight of progress on resolution implementation and on the oversight of UNEP's budget and the programme of work.

CPR's relationship with the UNEA Bureau is particularly important. Both governing bodies—UNEA and CPR—have bureaus, and their role and composition as well as their interaction require greater clarity. As per the current

mandate, the role of the UNEA Bureau is only administrative, but this presents an overlap with some of the functions of the CPR in terms of budgeting, the programme of work, and monitoring. In addition, there are some concerns about whether the ministerial level of representation at the UNEA Bureau enables the implementation of the administrative mandate. Some important outstanding questions include the following: Should the UNEA Bureau be focused on the administrative preparation of UNEA or on the substance of the discussions, and what should the relationship with the CPR Bureau be?

The CPR requires systematic engagement with UNEP to hold the secretariat accountable and provide consistent and useful input to the organization's operations. It is important, however, that the CPR also receive improved feedback from UNEP's secretariat on a range of operational issues, for example on finances. Additional analysis and agreement is required on the role of the open-ended CPR in the preparation of UNEA resolutions.

Areas for further attention

1. Improve UNEA's visibility and accountability
2. Improve information exchange between CPR and UNEP from both sides
3. Align the universal membership of UNEA with the membership of CPR
4. Ensure universal participation in UNEA by including countries with limited capacity and providing alternatives to physical attendance
5. Define rules of procedure for all governing bodies to eliminate overlaps and uncertainties
6. Consider institutionalizing procedures similar to those for convention conference of the parties (COPs) (a pre-negotiating week, either some months ahead or back to back with UNEA)
7. Define, implement, and monitor the parameters for UNEA resolutions and align with the programme of work and budget and medium-term strategy
8. Define the role of the CPR in the preparation of UNEA resolutions
9. Define the role of the UNEA Bureau: administrative or substantive preparation, level of representation
10. Engage stakeholders in decision making at UNEA and create mechanisms to that end

UNEP's Functions and Operation

Background

UNEP's mandate derives from the UN General Assembly Resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 1972, the 1997 Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme, and paragraph 88 of the Conference on Sustainable Development Outcome Document "The Future We Want," and it has stayed focused on six core functions:

1. Keep the world environmental situation under review and assess global and regional environmental trends.
2. Promote greater awareness and facilitate international cooperation and action in implementing the international environmental agenda.
3. Provide policy advice and early warning and serve as an effective link between the scientific community and policymakers.
4. Facilitate the development, implementation, and evolution of international norms and policies including linkages among existing international environmental conventions.
5. Coordinate environmental activities in the UN system.
6. Strengthen technology support and capacity in line with country needs and priorities.

These functions are grounded in the logic that accurate scientific data is the foundation for the development of sound environmental policies and management strategies. They are also based on the logic that catalyzing action in the UN system, among governments, and within civil society is a core pillar of sound policy, along with coordination of the environmental programs of intergovernmental UN bodies. Implementation of policies would hinge on the provision of support and capacity.

At the Rio+20 conference, governments had the option to transform UNEP from a subsidiary organ of the UN General Assembly into a specialized agency but decided that a dramatic change in UNEP's institutional form was neither necessary nor sufficient for the organization to fulfill its mandate. Rather, they committed to "strengthen and upgrade" UNEP by expanding its Governing Council, by increasing its financial resources through greater contributions from the UN regular budget, and by giving it a greater role in capacity building and implementation. Paragraph 88 articulated eight core elements of reform, and a few months later, Resolution 67/213 confirmed the need for "secure, stable, adequate and predictable financial resources for UNEP" and committed contributions from the UN regular budget in a manner that adequately reflects the organization's administrative and management costs.

Paragraph 88 of the Outcome Document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

We are committed to strengthening the role of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment. We reaffirm resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 15 December 1972 which established UNEP and other relevant resolutions that reinforce its mandate, as well as the 1997 Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of UNEP and the 2000 Malmö Ministerial Declaration. In this regard, we invite the General Assembly, at its sixty-seventh session, to adopt a resolution strengthening and upgrading UNEP in the following manner:

- a) Establish universal membership in the Governing Council of UNEP, as well as other measures to strengthen its governance as well its responsiveness and accountability to Member States;
- b) Have secure, stable, adequate and increased financial resources from the regular budget of the United Nations and voluntary contributions to fulfil its mandate;
- c) Enhance the voice of UNEP and its ability to fulfil its coordination mandate within the United Nations system by strengthening UNEP engagement in key United Nations coordination bodies and empowering UNEP to lead efforts to formulate United Nations system-wide strategies on the environment;
- d) Promote a strong science-policy interface, building on existing international instruments, assessments, panels and information networks, including the Global Environment Outlook, as one of the processes aimed at bringing together information and assessment to support informed decision-making;
- e) Disseminate and share evidence-based environmental information and raise public awareness on critical as well as emerging environmental issues;
- f) Provide capacity-building to countries, as well as support and facilitate access to technology;
- g) Progressively consolidate headquarters functions in Nairobi, as well as strengthen its regional presence, in order to assist countries, upon request, in the implementation of their national environmental policies, collaborating closely with other relevant entities of the United Nations system;
- h) Ensure the active participation of all relevant stakeholders drawing on best practices and models from relevant multilateral institutions and exploring new mechanisms to promote transparency and the effective engagement of civil society.

Discussion

Science and science-policy function

At the core of UNEP's mandate is its science function to keep the environment under review by assessing global and regional trends and identifying existing and emerging problems. Over the years, UNEP has gained considerable scientific credibility by providing expert knowledge to member states and to the international community and has built up the scientific basis for further policy development. It is therefore crucial to strengthen UNEP as a knowledge hub with the requisite capacity to provide on-demand expertise to countries. UNEP's expertise will also be important in the delivery of the broad environmental dimension across all SDGs based on existing and new data and information.

One of the key areas where UNEP requires further work is the strengthening of its authority around the science-policy interface, not only in terms of producing data, but also working with countries to collect data, and deploy and utilize it accordingly. Some member states face serious challenges in data collection. An improved scientific approach at UNEP could enable a more effective process of implementing the SDGs. UNEP could also champion the issues in which it has considerable knowledge and expertise, and raise awareness. Further agreement is required, however, to determine who should be the target of this process—the states or the broader public,—and how to interact with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to distribute the information provided by UNEP.

Policy and normative function

Building on its scientific inquiry and expertise, UNEP's mandate extended to providing policy guidance and support in policy implementation to member states when requested. At its core, UNEP's mandate is normative—assessing the state of the environment, identifying problems, and developing policy and legal instruments—rather than being operative and directly addressing environmental problems on the ground.

Coordinating the environmental activities of the UN system has been an important element of UNEP's normative function, but UNEP has faced significant challenges in establishing itself in a coordinating role with both credibility and visibility. Part of this includes collaboration and synergies with other organizations and environmental governance processes. UNEP needs to have a strategic approach that allows it to catalyze multiple processes within the system of global environmental governance. Stronger communication and information exchange with member states is also required for all areas of work, including the follow-up to UNEA resolutions.

Funding and finances are critical issues that reflect on the organization's ability to deliver on its mandate. Additional transparency and accountability in financial matters is necessary. And even though UNEP's revenues have increased in recent years, its financing is still unstable and insufficient to address all the issues that are part of UNEP's programme of work. Participants noted the need for all member states to contribute to the Environment Fund and expand the very limited donor base. Only 15 countries account for 90 percent of UNEP's resources since its creation. Reliance on such a limited number of countries for such a large part of the institution's budget makes it vulnerable to shifting political priorities. Moreover, with universal membership, more countries should take ownership of the work within UNEP and contribute to a solid financial base.

Supportive and catalytic function

The 1997 Nairobi Declaration and the Rio+20 outcome document strengthened the mandate and widened UNEP's role in capacity-building and support. Participants discussed a variety of issue areas, including the ability of UNEP's regional offices to respond to capacity support needs formulated at the local and country level and to support countries in their preparation for the ratification of new MEAs.

Participants noted that UNEP needs to strengthen its regional ministerial forums and offices to use them for capacity building and science or technology transfer. This change will improve UNEP's delivery of assistance to countries. Nonetheless, there is still debate on whether or not the functions of UNEP headquarters are consolidated, and what the optimal relationship between UNEP and its regional offices is. Mechanisms are still needed to improve the coordination and information exchange between Nairobi and the regional offices.



There is clear interest in some countries to enhance UNEP's role in implementation activities. The normative and/or operative functions of UNEP have been an important point of debate over the years. The view that UNEP's mandate is and should be normative has prevailed, but as implementation of the SDGs becomes an important concern for countries, there is a need to determine the extent to which UNEP is going to engage in implementation and define the parameters for its effectiveness as an organization. Changing its mandate will also require a clear definition of the role of the secretariat. To strengthen international environmental governance, it is imperative to examine and assess UNEP's operations and comparative advantage and adjust its operations and interaction with its member states as necessary.

Areas for further attention

1. Strengthen UNEP's regional ministerial forums and offices to provide more capacity support to countries and enhance the science-policy interface
2. Define the scope for UNEP's outreach function: to civil society or the public at large?
3. Define the scope of coordination functions: UN system or beyond?
4. Articulate UNEP's normative and operational function and the comparative advantage for the organization in each cluster of functions
5. Improve communication and information exchange between UNEP and member states
6. Improve the transparency and accountability for UNEP's financing and expenditures
7. Define the relationship between headquarters and regional offices
8. Define UNEP's contributions to developing countries and areas for improvement
9. Expand the donor base
10. Examine ways to secure stable funding

UNEP's Relationship with Multilateral Environmental Agreements

Background

International environmental law development became one of UNEP's major policy activities and, through the 1997 Nairobi Declaration, a central part of its mandate. It has also come to be regarded as one of the organization's most significant achievements. Once launched, however, the conventions have become autonomous entities with



legally independent structures, decision-making bodies and procedures, each with its own conference of the parties, secretariat, and subsidiary bodies. Some conventions are completely autonomous, including UNFCCC, UNCCD, or they are hosted by other organizations, such as the World Heritage Convention, which in turn is hosted by UNESCO and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands hosted by IUCN.

Governed by their respective conference of the parties, the convention secretariats see themselves clearly as responsive to them. This has created some tension between UNEP and the convention secretariats, and the opportunity to work together on implementation and capacity building has not always been effectively utilized. Currently, UNEP provides the secretariat for 13 agreements and is expected to do so for two other agreements (the Tehran Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea and the Minamata Convention on Mercury). The secretariats of the MEAs are also geographically dispersed. Nairobi, Montreal, Geneva, and Bonn host some of the convention secretariats. In Resolution 2/18 of UNEA 2, governments identified three areas for improvement of the relationship between UNEP and the MEAs for which it provides the secretariats, including institutional framework and accountability, administrative and financial frameworks, and mutual supportiveness for the programmes of work.

Discussion

UNEP has been successful in using its scientific capabilities to identify environmental problems and subsequently help governments create the requisite mechanisms for cooperation. Once UNEP has articulated the problem and outlined the science-policy interface, the convention secretariats are responsible for the implementation of the legal agreements.



In this process, there is a need for a clear template of functions in the provision of services to the secretariats that UNEP is administering.

Functions range from programmatic to administrative and the relationship between UNEP, convention secretariats, and member states should be enhanced to ensure more effective implementation. This requires improvements in administrative functioning and support and a decrease in competition. UNEP should be an attractive home for MEAs, offering complementary functions, capacity-building support, and the opportunity to work with member states for the identification of best practices. UNEP cannot serve as the financial mechanism for MEAs. Ultimately, the connection between UNEP and the MEAs should avoid having executive bodies take contradictory decisions. The executive secretaries of the conventions that UNEP administers should also be part of UNEP's executive team. As part of these organization arrangements, it is important to define synergies among the MEAs in ways that do not generate additional bureaucracy.

The process of implementation also requires support from UNEA. An alternative for this is a Hard Talk series in which MEA executive secretaries participate in a discussion with member states. The engagement of civil society is also important. Finally, the role of MEAs in the implementation of the SDGs is critical.

Areas for further attention

1. Provide success stories on implementation of MEAs and give credit to countries where progress has been made
2. Encourage learning among peers
3. Support conventions and don't compete with them when it comes to implementation
4. Avoid contradictory decisions between the executive bodies of MEAs and UNEP
5. Include the MEAs in UNEA decision making to promote and ensure implementation
6. Define a standard operating procedure for the creation of new MEAs
7. Create a template of functions, programmatic and administrative, for the provision of services to convention secretariats

UNEP's Role in the New Agenda for Sustainable Development

Background

The Sustainable Development Goals brought together in an integrated manner the development imperative of the Millennium Development Goals, the environmental ambitions of the global environmental conventions, and fundamental social goals. They were conceived as universal and inclusive, applicable to "all nations and peoples and for all segments of society." Building on the MDGs and the decisions of Rio+20, the SDGs sought to motivate action and improve the ability of countries to deliver on core development indicators. The use of concrete targets and indicators proved an effective instrument for focusing efforts on the MDGs, monitoring the evolution of different strategies, and prompting global political mobilization. The SDGs also integrated the objectives of the environmental conventions, which, though more general, offered guidelines on the purpose and implementation of each agreement, and incorporated policy tools such as the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, including the Aichi Biodiversity Targets for 2011–2020 and the Overall Orientation and Guidance for Achieving the 2020 Goal of SAICM (Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management).

UNEP made valuable contributions to the creation of Agenda 2030. In the planning stage, it ensured that the environmental dimension was embedded and linked with the social and economic dimension of the global goals and advocated for universality of the agenda. As the anchor institution for

the global environment, UNEP is one of the key actors in the monitoring of progress since 80 of the 179 indicators are environment-based. UNEP is the custodian agency for 26 indicators, 11 of which are related to Goal 12 on Responsible Consumption and Production.

Resolution 2/5 adopted at UNEA 2 is an important milestone for the implementation of the environmental dimension of the SDGs. It clarifies the roles of UNEA and UNEP in this process and defines institutional linkages with other sustainable development institutions. It commits UNEA to

- Provide overarching policy guidance and define policy responses to address emerging environmental challenges
- Undertake policy review, dialogue, and exchange of experiences
- Foster partnerships for achieving environmental goals and resource mobilization
- Convey the main messages of its sessions to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development to support its function in the follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Rio+20 created the United Nations High-Level Political Forum, which is the central platform for follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. A key mechanism to conduct this mission are the thematic reviews, which respond to the need for a more integrated approach in the implementation and analysis of the SDGs.

Discussion

The key question regarding the issue of sustainable development is the role of UNEP in the implementation of the SDGs. To this end, a feasible programme of work that aligns with the process of the SDGs is required. Participants agreed that a key component of UNEP's role in the sustainable development agenda is the provision of data and information. UNEP can articulate the environmental dimension of each goal and produce relevant data and knowledge focusing on reporting on implementation and delivery. In doing this, it should build on existing efforts and goals such as the internationally agreed environmental goals and the Aichi Targets. Member states could make an impact on the HLPF by adopting political decisions at UNEA seeking to achieve specific SDG targets and deploying existing processes and products, including the internationally agreed environmental goals and the Global Environmental Outlook to provide structured input to the HLPF.

Integration of the indicators and the focus on the science-policy interface should support UNEP's contribution to

sustainable development. At this point, indicators are not properly integrated and clear definitions for organizations and states are required to define responsibilities. In addition, there should be a clear and strong message from UNEP and UNEA to other policy areas. The nexus dialogues developed by the Environment Management Group provide another option for such engagement. Partnerships should be created around the goals for sustainable development, not the indicators. Importantly, the SDGs should not present a hierarchy of issue areas. Rather, they should empower action on and across the range of issue areas that the goals encompass.

At the organizational level, two areas demand attention: the relationship between UNEA and the HLPF and the extent to which UNEA should focus on the existing gaps in the SDGs. Clear definitions of mandates, roles, and relationships are required. Furthermore, all stakeholders should be brought to the table, and common solutions should be developed and implemented. Channels of communication should be developed to work efficiently with various actors, including other international organizations and stakeholders.

Areas for further attention

1. Articulate UNEP's role in the implementation of SDGs in the programme of work
2. Build on existing mechanisms when working on the environmental dimension of the SDGs
3. Communicate a strong policy message to other organizations through UNEA or EMG
4. Define responsibilities of member states and organizations in the process of implementation
5. Define the relationship between UNEP, UNEA, and HLPF
6. Improve integration of targets and indicators to correspond with initial goals
7. Engage stakeholders more effectively



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Views expressed in this report are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Center for Governance and Sustainability or the University of Massachusetts Boston.

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CENTER FOR GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

JOHN W. McCORMACK GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF POLICY AND GLOBAL STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation

Federal Office for the Environment FOEN

Center for Governance and Sustainability

Maria Ivanova, director

John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy
and Global Studies
University of Massachusetts Boston
100 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, MA 02125
cgs@umb.edu
www.umb.edu/cgs
www.environmentalgovernance.org

Federal Office for the Environment

Ambassador Franz Perrez, Head of
International Affairs Division

Federal Office for the Environment
International Affairs Division
3003 Bern
Switzerland
international@bafu.admin.ch
www.bafu.admin.ch/en