



# Environmental governance

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United Nations Environment Programme



# An overview

Governing our planet's rich and diverse natural resources is an increasingly complex challenge. In our globalised world of interconnected nations, economies and people, managing environmental threats, particularly those that cross political borders such as air pollution and biodiversity loss, will require new global, regional, national and local responses involving a wide range of stakeholders.

Effective environmental governance at all levels is critical for finding solutions to these challenges. Environmental Governance comprises the rules, practices, policies and institutions that shape how humans interact with the environment.

Good environmental governance takes into account the role of all actors that impact the environment. From governments to NGOs, the private sector and civil society, cooperation is critical to achieving effective governance that can help us move towards a more sustainable future.

UNEP's mandate is to be the leading global environmental authority. From delivering expert scientific assessments to providing international platforms for negotiation and decision-making, UNEP has been fulfilling this mandate since 1972.

UNEP's Environmental Governance sub-programme promotes informed environmental decision-making to enhance global and regional environmental cooperation and governance. Working with States and all major groups and stakeholders, UNEP helps to bridge the science and policy gaps by keeping the state of the global environment under review, identifying threats at an early stage, developing sound environmental policies, and helping States successfully implement these policies.

## Our goals

The Environmental Governance sub-programme focuses on strengthening global, regional, national and local environmental governance to address agreed environmental priorities. The sub-programme has four key goals:

- **Sound science for decision-making:** UNEP aims to influence the international environmental agenda by reviewing global environmental trends and emerging issues, and bringing these scientific findings to policy forums.
- **International cooperation:** UNEP helps States cooperate to achieve agreed environmental priorities, and supports efforts to develop, implement and enforce new international environmental laws and standards.

- **National development planning:** UNEP promotes the integration of environmental sustainability into regional and national development policies, and helps States understand the benefits of this approach.

- **International policy setting and technical assistance:** UNEP works with States and other stakeholders to strengthen their laws and institutions, helping them achieve environmental goals, targets and objectives.

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## Poverty alleviation

Almost half the jobs worldwide depend on fisheries, forests or agriculture. Non-sustainable use of natural resources, including land, water, and these forests and fisheries, threaten individual livelihoods as well as local, national and international economies. Current environmental governance arrangements are inadequate and have led to continued degradation of the environment. Considerations for a reformed regime must take into account the economic and social benefits of preserving the environment.

As the leading global environmental authority since 1972, UNEP has a rich history of helping States meet the challenges of environmental governance.





# Our vision for 2010-2013

What if States could craft environmental policies based on up-to-date, accurate information on emerging issues and the state of the global environment? What if environmental sustainability was an integral part of all national development planning, helping to reduce poverty and increase long-term security for vulnerable populations? What if States could cooperate effectively on the global stage, developing international agreements that moved us closer to a sustainable future? And what if States could enter into lasting and effective strategic alliances with major groups and stakeholder to achieve common goals and objectives?

UNEP's Environmental Governance sub-programme is working to make this vision a reality during the 2010-13 period of UNEP's Medium-term Strategy. From providing decision-makers with access to sound science to enhancing global and regional cooperation, UNEP has a rich history of helping States meet the challenges of environmental governance.

UNEP's vision is based on delivering:

## International cooperation

UNEP has unparalleled convening power on the global stage. UNEP will continue to use its experience as a neutral facilitator to enhance cooperation between States and other actors to support international decision-making, and ensure environmental threats are effectively addressed. To enhance the quality and impact of this work, UNEP will also support political and programmatic cooperation with a broad and diverse spectrum of major groups and stakeholders.

## Strengthened national laws and institutions

To achieve their environmental commitments and goals, States need strong legislative, political and judicial systems. UNEP will use its expertise in environmental policy and law to help States further develop these institutions, and enhance their ability to effectively participate in international negotiations.

## Sustainable regional and national development

UN country teams play a critical role in providing the supporting services needed to address environmental issues. UNEP will continue to work with these teams, as well as national governments, to mainstream environmental sustainability into development policies. UNEP will also support regional development, contributing to the establishment and strengthening of institutional arrangements to manage transboundary natural resources.

## Access to sound science

As a science-based organization, UNEP provides environmental data and information that is critical to crafting effective policy solutions. UNEP will produce and communicate this information and help connect scientific networks to national governments to bridge the science-policy gap.





UNEP works with States and all major groups and stakeholders to help bridge science and policy.

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# Delivering our vision

UNEP's work on Environmental Governance is focused on four core services:

## Sound science for decision-making

UNEP supports coherent international decision-making processes for environmental governance.

### • Global Environment Outlook

The GEO is UNEP's flagship assessment and the only UN report with an outlook component to provide a regular update on the state and trends of the global environment. It identifies policy options and their indicative costs and benefits, bringing diverse stakeholder groups together to raise awareness on these key trends and policy solutions. UNEP is currently working on the fifth GEO which will be published in 2012, and will contribute to the Rio+20 preparations.

### • Scientific networks

To help close science-policy gaps, UNEP works to connect key scientific networks to policymakers and development authorities.

### • Capacity building tools and services

UNEP helps States and other actors design and deploy tools to regularly monitor their natural resources and keep their environmental situation under review.

## International cooperation

UNEP catalyses international efforts to implement internationally agreed objectives.

### • International laws, norms and standards

UNEP promotes cooperation on environmental policy between governments, UN agencies, other intergovernmental bodies, and major groups and stakeholders. UNEP's work focuses in particular on aligning international laws and standards with the goals, targets and

## International policy setting and technical assistance

UNEP helps governments further develop and strengthen their national, subregional and regional policies, laws and institutions underpinning environmental governance, and develop tools and methods for environmental management.

### • Environmental law and institutions

UNEP helps governments develop and strengthen their judicial, political and legal systems to provide a sound basis for environmental governance.

### • Stakeholder engagement

UNEP actively engages in strategic partnerships with national governments, major groups and stakeholders, ranging from NGOs to businesses and civil society. UNEP helps national governments use these partnerships to harness a participatory, results-oriented approach to addressing environmental challenges.

## National development planning

UNEP helps governments and regional institutions place environmental sustainability at the heart of their development policies, and make full use of the UN Development Group platform. UNEP also helps governments to understand and manage environmental data and information, providing a sound basis for environmental governance.

### • Regional institutions

UNEP helps develop and strengthen institutional arrangements across the world that support sustainable management of shared natural resources, and address transboundary environmental issues.

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