

A large white wind turbine stands against a clear blue sky. In the foreground, a young child with long dark hair, wearing a bright yellow shirt, is seen from behind. The child's right arm is raised towards the turbine, and their left hand holds a colorful, multi-colored lollipop. The child's head is tilted upwards, looking at the turbine.

UNEP climate change strategy

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY

FOR THE UNEP PROGRAMME OF WORK 2010-2011

Contents

1. The defining challenge of our age	3
2. UNEP's long-term commitment to climate change	5
3. Mandate	8
4. Partnership	9
5. UNEP's past activities in climate change	12
<i>Adaptation</i>	12
<i>Mitigation</i>	14
<i>Cross-cutting</i>	17
6. Strategic priorities of UNEP's climate change programme	19
<i>Theme 1: Adapting by building resilience</i>	22
<i>Theme 2: Facilitating a transition towards low carbon societies</i>	25
<i>Theme 3: Improving understanding of climate change science</i>	28
<i>Theme 4: Communicating and raising public awareness</i>	30

The road leading to the 15th UNFCCC Conference of Parties in Copenhagen in December 2009 is a critical one if we are to address climate change and collectively set the world on a development path that does not undermine our future.

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1. The defining challenge of our age

Climate change is generally recognized as the major environmental problem facing the globe. Evidence is building that impacts are being felt in the form of melting icecaps in the polar areas and increased variability of temperature, rainfall and storms in virtually all regions. The scientific consensus underpinning the rising political and public recognition of the climate problem has been captured in the recent reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

The IPCC Fourth Assessment Report (AR4) clearly states that it is no longer relevant to discuss whether the climate is changing but rather how much change we are committed to and how fast this will occur. In addition the IPCC emphasized that climate change, while a long-term issue, needs to be considered as a medium term problem requiring short-term action. The IPCC also states that the required action to forestall serious climate change is possible with strong policies, technology development and transfer of technologies using a broad range of policy and technical options.

The total costs of limiting concentrations of greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) to manageable levels will be significant. However, when compared with the anticipated economic impacts of climate change if mitigation does not occur and the size of the world economy and its expected growth over the coming decades, the costs of mitigation will amount to a small fraction of that growth.

Action to forestall serious climate change is possible with strong policies, technology development and transfer of technologies using a broad range of policy and technical options.

UNEP has more than twenty years of experience working on climate change. UNEP helped establish the IPCC with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in the 1980s and supported the negotiation of the UNFCCC, which entered into force in 1994.

In short, combating climate change should not affect overall economic development patterns. AR4, however, underlines that this statement is only true if action is taken urgently and that costs will increase if action is delayed. A similar point was made in the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change.

The 13th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Bali in December 2007 (CoP13) reached an historic agreement on the fight against global warming and the world community's ability to deal with climate change. Decision 1/CP.13 (the Bali Action Plan), launched a comprehensive process to enable the full, effective and sustained implementation of the Convention through long-term cooperative action, now, up to and beyond 2012, in order to reach an agreed outcome and adopt a decision at its fifteenth session. The road leading to the 15th Conference of Parties in Copenhagen in December 2009 is a critical one if we are to address climate change and collectively set the world on a development path that does not undermine our future.

The political landscape is changing fast in some areas and provides reason for optimism. At the same time the reality is that developments on short-term policy actions and key issues under negotiation are still moving relatively slowly. In addition, and notwithstanding the increasing political focus, greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) continue to increase and not enough has been done to support increased resilience to climate change in developing countries.

Addressing climate change is now central to the work of the United Nations. The UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, has not only made climate change one of the three priorities for the UN system, but is also tirelessly championing what he has called "the defining challenge of our age".

2. UNEP's long-term commitment to climate change

UNEP has more than twenty years of experience working on climate change. UNEP helped establish the IPCC with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in the 1980s and conducted assessments of the scientific understanding of climate change in preparation for the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). UNEP also supported the negotiation of the UNFCCC, which entered into force in 1994.

Beyond its support for science and legal mechanisms, UNEP's work has concentrated on efforts to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, mainly by promoting renewable energy and improved energy efficiency, and spurring development of a carbon market. UNEP has also been active in efforts to reduce the risks of, and improve society's resilience to, climate change, notably through its support to the development of National Adaptation Programmes of Action. Many of UNEP's activities, while not driven solely by climate concerns, have had positive mitigation or adaptation impacts.

While these efforts have often broken new ground in terms of innovation and awareness raising, successes have sometimes remained localized. In order to confront the challenges spelled out clearly by the IPCC, UNEP will significantly scale up its climate activities where it can add more value, working always with its major partners and stakeholders. Given its longstanding experience and mandate, UNEP is well positioned to step up its support to governments, the private sector and civil society helping them to reduce emission of greenhouse gases and to prepare for the consequences resulting from a changed climate.



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The climate change programme will build on UNEP's areas of distinctiveness which include:

- A broad environmental perspective and expertise in linking climate change to other environment and development issues in an integrated manner;
- A global environmental mandate that allows UNEP to both work with developed and developing countries on normative frameworks and undertake projects in developing countries;
- Scientific expertise and a science-based approach that is strongly supported by a wide network of world-class scientific institutions and UNEP collaborating centres;
- Convening power and proven ability of working on issues through multi-stakeholder and multi-disciplinary approaches, including its strong relationship with the private sector;
- Proven track record of raising public awareness on environmental and climate change issues.

UNEP has strong competencies which can be built on in areas such as finance, including the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM); clean energy; ecosystems; environmental assessments; law and governance; and regional support for capacity building and technology transfer. Strengthening will be required, but these are areas where UNEP has a recognized comparative strength or advantage in relation to other international institutions. The organization will work with UN and other partners to improve its strategic presence. It will build a comprehensive climate change programme that cuts across the

entire organization and brings together projects and funds from multiple sources to deliver results within the framework of its climate change strategy.

UNEP's Climate Change Strategy is the result of a comprehensive process involving external experts and UNEP staff from across the organization. The strategy is built on the analysis of UNEP's political mandate, the existing portfolio of climate change activities and the areas of distinctiveness. The Climate Change Strategy provides the foundation for transforming the organization's engagement on climate change and for developing a results-oriented programme of work. UNEP will complement other processes and the activities of other institutions and will emphasize the substantial co-benefits of climate change actions and their contribution to environmental sustainability.

UNEP's strategy and climate change programme in no way prejudice the current climate negotiations. UNEP will adapt its programme in 2010–11 to reflect any future climate agreement, including on the international financial regime on climate change finance, and the needs of the UNFCCC Secretariat and its Parties resulting from such agreements.

Climate change is one of the six cross-cutting thematic priorities in UNEP's Medium Term Strategy around which the organization will focus its activities as it becomes a more effective, efficient and results-focused entity.

3. Mandate

There is significant political support for UNEP's climate change work. Member States have expressed their support through UNEP mandates, decisions by the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, the approved programmes of work for 2006-2007 and 2008-2009, incorporating a range of activities across all Divisions to address the climate challenge, as well as the global framework agreed through the UNFCCC. These political drivers include:

- The Malmö Ministerial Declaration of 2000, recognizing the “tremendous risk of climate change” as an environmental issue that needs to be addressed;
- The adoption of a cross-cutting issue on biodiversity and climate change within the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD);
- The Bali Strategic Plan that includes “climate change” as a main thematic area.

UNEP's work on climate change is further guided by the Medium Term Strategy 2010-2013. At the tenth special session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum in February 2008,

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