



# UNEA

United Nations Environment Assembly  
of the United Nations Environment Programme

Delivering on the 2030 Agenda



## Outcomes of Geneva Multistakeholders Dialogue on the preparations of the Second Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

Monday 4 April 2016



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## Background on the United Nations Environment Assembly

The second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-2) will take place at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, under the overarching theme of Delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, from 23-27 May 2016. The Assembly, which represents the world's highest-level decision-making body on the environment, will culminate in resolutions and a global call to action to address the critical environmental challenges facing the world today.

The UN Environment Assembly was established after the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in June 2012 (Rio+20) when it was resolved that UNEP should be strengthened and upgraded and have a new governing body. The Assembly enjoys the greatest participation of such a forum worldwide, with universal membership of all of the 193 UN Member States.

UNEA-2, the second meeting of the governing body, provides the opportunity to build on UNEA-1's success in advancing the global environmental agenda, which produced 17 resolutions, 1 decision, 6 publications and 2 symposia, with the help of its 1,200 participants.

The wide participation of all stakeholders in UNEA-2 is an utmost priority for UNEP and the success of UNEA-2. It is crucial for effective agenda-setting to include the voices of the world's environmental and sustainable development advocates on the ground in high-level decision-making.



## UNEA-2 briefing and multi-stakeholder dialogue in Geneva

UNEA-2 will feature a number of high-level events on areas of expertise of International Geneva. A briefing and multi-stakeholder dialogue on preparations for UNEA-2 for Geneva-based Permanent Missions, Inter-governmental organizations and civil society was organized by the Geneva Environment Network, UNEP Regional Office for Europe and the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS). The event took place on Monday 4 April 2016, at the International Environment House II.

The meeting was opened by a general introduction to the preparations of UNEA-2, and an exchange on how Geneva-based government missions and civil society can engage in this event and beyond. It was followed by a series of panel discussions on the main themes of UNEA-2, linking to areas of expertise of International Geneva, namely:

- » Delivering on the Environmental Dimension of the 2030 Agenda (the overarching theme of UNEA-2)
- » Healthy Environment, Healthy People
- » Mobilizing Resources for Sustainable Investments
- » Environment and Displacement: Root Causes and Implications

### Welcome and Introduction to UNEA-2

Jan Dusik, Director and Regional Representative for Europe, presented the state of play with the preparations for the second session of UNEA, and important topics that will be discussed in Nairobi. He directed the participants to a number of activities, events and documents that would help representatives of governments, civil society and the private sector planning to attend. The documents include those linked to the high-level ministerial segment:

- » Delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda;
- » Healthy Environment, Healthy People thematic report; and
- » [the five Clusters of resolutions](#).

In terms of meeting and events, Jan Dusik presented in details:

- » the Science-Policy Forum (SPF) taking place from 19-20 May 2016;
- » the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum (GMGSF) on 21-22 May 2016;
- » celebration of the International Day of Biodiversity on 22 May 2016;
- » the Sustainable Innovations Expo 2016 (SIE 2016) that will focus on 9 topics Air quality, Blue economy, Energy, Gender, Information, Building coalitions of Global Commons, South-South Cooperation, Urbanization;
- » Symposiums on Mobilizing Resources for Sustainable Investments, and Displacement and the Environment: Root causes and implications;
- » the several side events with high-level participants and experts; and
- » green room events planned to enrich the debate at UNEA-2.

The Green room events are primarily for civil society, with a view to sharing experiences and increasing opportunities for informal dialogue among the participants of UNEA-2. Slots for Green Room side events are 23-26 May, all day starting at 10am, in parallel to UNEA sessions.

Participants were invited to reflect on the presentation, and a few highlights from the interaction with the participants include:

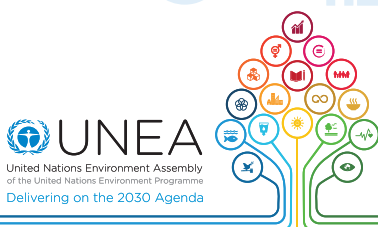
- » The importance of a ministerial declaration for the SDGs' implementation that would serve as reference point for governments, civil society, private sector and other stakeholders for the implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda.
- » The need for UNEP to find better ways of engaging governments and other stakeholders who are not physically present in Nairobi, for example, at the Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) which is now open to all Member States and accredited stakeholders. This situation must be improved to give greater access to member states who do not have representation in Nairobi and other stakeholders who have a role to play in the implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development. An idea to further develop is the establishment of The Group of Friends of UNEA in Geneva.
- » With regards to the participation of Ministers at UNEA, many member states flagged the importance of active engagement of Ministers at UNEA. This included a suggestion to increase the number of ministerial roundtables, beyond the two already scheduled.
- » Stressed the need to link the different discussions at UNEA with the proposed resolutions. Member states were interested to receive the list of speakers to coordinate with colleagues who will be attending UNEA.



## Delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda

UNEA-2 is taking place under the overarching theme, "Delivering on the Environmental Dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." At the high-level plenary meeting to provide direction on the implementation of the **environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda**, environment ministers and other high-level representatives will outline how the environmental community will work to achieve the SDGs. They will also define the role that UNEP will play in supporting nations and peoples to achieve these goals.

**Mark Halle**, IISD's European Representative, reminded the participants that Rio+20 enabled the upgrading of UNEP and also the creation of UNEA as a governing body deciding on UNEP's programme of work as well as a universal assembly with the highest authority on environmental issues. It begs the question of how do we deal with something that has a dual purpose? UNEA has to be an open forum for global challenges.



Just like Rio+20 in 2012, the second half of 2015 represents a significant watershed for sustainable development with the adoption of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the COP21 Paris Agreement. These interconnected agendas represent a major game-changer for the environment. For decades we have been saying to people and institutions dealing with social and economic issues to integrate the environment. The great news is when looking at the SDGs, the environment is fully integrated throughout the agenda and we need to face the new reality and complexity of its implementation – and rise up to that challenge.

Therefore, we are dealing with an agenda that is integrated and indivisible, a universal agenda that requires commitment and action of all countries. As we prepare ourselves for UNEA-2, the question we need to ask is: how can an institution like UNEP with universal membership and a mandate that covers both developed and developing countries will use this forum and dedicated platform for the environment to deliver on the 2030 Agenda? In that context, a few issues were underlined by Mr. Halle:

1. The 2030 Agenda cannot and will not be implemented without the full participation of all stakeholders. We need to go beyond governments, and for that matter beyond the UN. It has to be inclusive and involve more partners such as the private sector, civil society and municipalities.
2. The UNEA has to be a major milestone in tracking and assessing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda from the environmental angle to see how this indivisible and integrated agenda works.
3. We also need to figure out, how to use and configure UNEA as stepping stone to accountability – a forum with accountability functions on environment.
4. We also need to address how we are prepared to pay for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the costs of which are estimated in trillions. It is unrealistic to expect governments to pay for all of it at a time when economies are declining, along with official development assistance. Therefore, we need to find better ways of aligning the interest of the private sector with sustainable goals.
5. UNEA has to be a forum for ideas, innovation, best practices and a market place for partnerships. This needs to be crystalized within UNEP.

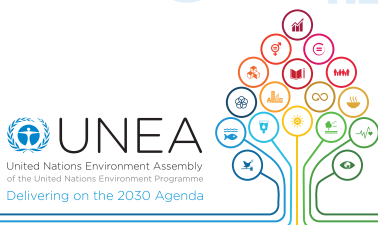


## Healthy Environment, Healthy People

The **Healthy Environment, Healthy People** report, to be launched at the Assembly, will address the nexus between environmental health and public health in light of the 2030 Agenda. A Ministerial Policy-Review Session will gather at UNEA under the overarching theme **Healthy Environment, Healthy People**. At this session, ministers and other high-level officials will identify concrete partnerships, policies and tools that can help to achieve the SDGs in critical areas such as air quality, healthy ecosystems, chemicals and waste.

**Pierre Quiblier**, Programme Officer at the UNEP’s Chemicals and Waste Branch, presented the report “Healthy Environment, Healthy People” which will be submitted to Member States and discussed with high-level panelists during UNEA-2.

Since the SDG 3 is at the heart of UNEA, the scientific evidence of linkages between healthy environment healthy people highlighted in the report should be a start to propose new options and collaborative solutions. It is an opportunity offered by the SDGs to act on the social, environment and economic determinants of good health in a cohesive way.



The main environmental and health risks and their impact, as indicated in the report and presented by M. Quiblier, are: air pollution, lack of access to clean water and sanitation, chemical pollution, poorly managed hazardous and other waste, natural disasters (which affect 42 million people). These findings have to be communicated and presented to governments, policy-makers and to a wide spectrum of stakeholders so that policy options are proposed for improved health and well-being.

Annette Prüss-Ustün, from WHO's Public Health and the Environment Department, mentioned the publication of a new review by WHO with comprehensive information and solutions -as per their own findings- related to the links between environment and health. This linkage explains 25% of the diseases even though they are still preventable. Through one environmental strategy, we often address an array of diseases at the same time.

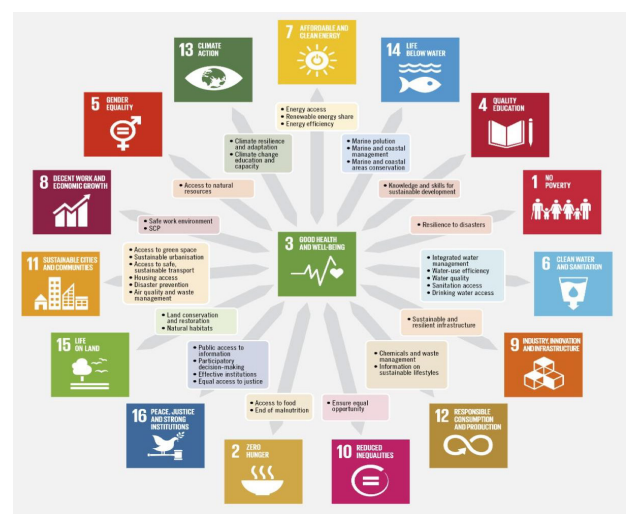
In 10 years, since the last review, much of the burden has shifted from infectious diseases to non-communicable diseases, due to the aging of the population, which creates its own complications (especially heart disease and strokes). Air pollution remains the main cause due to all the toxic substances that affect the whole body.

Some population groups are more affected, such as the South East Asian and African regions. Children under 5 years old are especially vulnerable, but all socioeconomic groups are affected in different ways.

Health should be systematically addressed in all of the policies:

- » In terms of the health sector itself, too little funds are used for prevention, roughly 2-3% of expenditure, the rest being used on treatment. The need for treatment can be significantly reduced if there is more effort put in prevention.
- » In terms of cost estimates, a look should be taken into the real cost of certain goods. For example, how much does the use of oil really cost when you factor in the externalities of health?
- » Transport policies, relying less on individualized transport could mitigate climate change, increase walking and address air pollution. It is a win-win situation.

Pierre Quiblier pointed out in addition to what Ms. Prüss-Ustün said that we are dealing with the consequences without shaping the appropriate policies, including for prevention, and that UNEA can help on that by using scientific evidence to raise awareness.



**Bettina Borisch**, Head of the World Federation of Public Health Associations' Geneva Office, mentioned the publication of their own report, the Global Charter for the Public Health which is almost the same as the Healthy Environment Healthy People report.

Both reports also share the same set of recommendations: cross-sectorial partnerships, systematic communication and multi-sectorial dialogue for example.

Speaking of the sense of integration into practical policies, Ms. Borisch highlighted the role of civil society: advocacy based on grounded experience, policy monitoring, policy dialogue and campaigns for policy change.

UNEP and the WHO have worked for years to bring health and environment together. A lot of energy and human resources have been dedicated by the two UN organizations to bring this awareness. How much more needs to be done to bring all the relevant actors together? She also outlined the gaps in global development, notably the jurisdictional constraints of problems that cut across sovereign borders and what she described as the "human mindset", which needs to evolve towards greater health and environmental consciousness.

### Mobilizing Ressources for Sustainable Investments

UNEP has completed in October 2015 a comprehensive, two-year Inquiry into the Design of a Sustainable Financial System. The actors in this space – many of them in Geneva – are numerous and each holds an essential piece of the puzzle. A Symposium for **Mobilizing Resources for Sustainable Investments** at UNEA-2 will include an overview of the main findings of the Inquiry report. Perhaps the single greatest challenge in the necessary transition to sustainable development lies in harnessing the financial system to the needs of a productive, inclusive and environmentally-responsible economy. This will require reforms of the policies, rules and practices that govern financial and capital markets.

**Hamish Jenkins**, head of the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service in Geneva, moderated the session. He noted that despite some efforts to re-regulate finance after the global financial crisis of 2008-9, we are still faced with extremely dangerous systemic risks. The financial system is still prone to instability and crisis and it is still divorced from the real economy and the need to provide long-term affordable credit in an inclusive manner needed to align the financial system with sustainable



development. These issues have been addressed in two recent major UN reports. Firstly the report of UNEP's Inquiry: Design of Sustainable Finance Systems, which will be the basis for a high level symposium during UNEA-2. Secondly, the UNCTAD Trade and Development Report 2015, focusing on reform of the international financial architecture for development, which he said complements the findings of the UNEP report.

**Iain Henderson**, G20 Green Finance Study Group Project Manager at UNEP Inquiry, presented an overview of the UNEP report on helping to align financial systems with sustainable development, by assessing climate risks and its impact, setting green financial goals and promoting financial inclusion.

Three key findings of the report were outlined, before mentioning that the mandate of the inquiry has been extended for a couple of years:

1. Financial corporate markets can be aligned with sustainable development: how to use public funds smartly?
2. A "quiet revolution" is under way to integrate sustainable development into the fabric of the financial system through policy measures targeting the main asset pools and actors in a large number of countries;
3. This is a window in time - these changes come primarily from emerging economies.
4. M. Henderson also mentioned that the recently created G20 green finance study group is co-chaired by China and the United Kingdom and that many actors were starting to engage (its report is to be out in September 2016).

One important question remains: how financial technology can impact the financial system of tomorrow? There is a need for measurements of financial performance.

**Stephanie Blankenburg**, Head at UNCTAD's Debt and Development Finance Branch, noted that her remarks would be informed by the findings of UNCTAD's annual Trade and Development Report.

She welcomed the fact that the UNEP inquiry recognizes the need to reform of the financial system but thought that it is perhaps too optimistic as to scale of the changes implied in the "quiet revolution" outlined in the report.

From her macroeconomist point of view, her reservations regarding this report concern its strong reliance in successfully leveraging private finance: "Too much confidence, too little criticism".

Systemic problems characterize the core feature of the international finance system:

- a- private capital funds are extremely volatile;
- b- the system left to itself is prone to regular financial crisis

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