

UNEP in 2002

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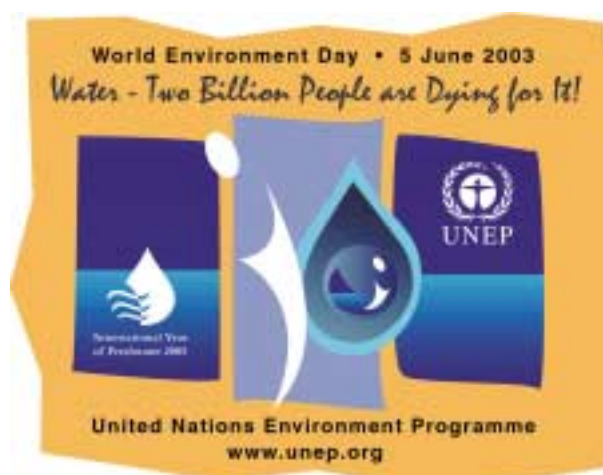
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UNEP Governing Structure

The UNEP Governing Council was established in accordance with UN General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 15 December 1975 (Institutional and financial arrangements for international environmental cooperation). The Governing Council reports to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council. Its 58 members are elected by the General Assembly for four-year terms, taking into account the principle of equitable regional representation. Full information on the composition, functions and responsibilities of the UNEP Governing Council and the Committee of Permanent Representatives, formally established and strengthened as a subsidiary organ to the Governing Council by decision 19/32 of 4 April 1997, is available at www.unep.org/governingbodies.

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* Members whose terms expire on 31 December 2003.

** Members whose terms expire on 31 December 2005.

Message from the United Nations Secretary-General

At the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg from 26 August to 4 September 2002, world leaders reaffirmed their commitment to securing a better future for all people, in all countries, for all generations. Ten years after the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, there was general recognition that the impetus for implementing Agenda 21 had slowed, that new challenges faced humanity, that the state of the global environment remained distressingly fragile, and that the world needed to restore the momentum for sustainable development.

The negotiations that produced the Johannesburg Declaration and WSSD Plan of Implementation were intense and detailed, reflecting the complexity of the questions being asked. But the outcome was a step forward for sustainable development. Agreement was reached on a wide range of actions with real potential to improve the lives of current and future generations, and many partnerships were established that will further weave the principles of sustainability into the fabric of everyday life.

Johannesburg also made clear, as never before, that environmental protection, rather than detracting from social progress and economic growth, is essential for it. And as one of the Millennium Development Goals, ensuring environmental sustainability is not only an end in its own right, it is also a crucial factor in achieving the other goals, such as reducing poverty and hunger.

This report reviews UNEP's efforts over the past year to raise awareness, to promote coherent environmental governance, to carry out assessments of environmental conditions and threats, and to keep environmental protection firmly established on the international development agenda. A single thread connects this broad spectrum of activities: the global quest for sustainable development. Judging by the events and trends documented in this report, the role of UNEP—the UN system's voice for the environment, and a key collaborator with governments, civil society, the private sector—will grow even more important in the years ahead as the world wrestles with the increasingly urgent challenge of doing more to protect the environmental foundations on which all humankind depends.



M. Grant / UN Photo

Kofi Annan
United Nations Secretary-General

2002: A step towards a sustainable future



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Klaus Toepfer began his second four-year term as UNEP Executive Director in February 2002.

How will 2002 be viewed by future generations? It is my hope that when historians weigh the impact of the year's whirlwind of environment-related meetings, conferences and summits, they may record that the second year of the new millennium and UNEP's thirtieth anniversary was a defining moment in the long march towards a more environmentally sound, sustainable, healthier and fairer world.

It is too easy to view events such as the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg or the Finance for Development meeting in Monterrey, Mexico, as just more high-level political talking shops that are merely prolonging the agony of the planet and the poor. I believe we have, as a result of the negotiations and agreements that preoccupied much of 2002 and culminated in WSSD, witnessed some real stirrings of intent and some clear routes of progress that can transform the fine words of previous years and decades into genuine action.

UNEP came to WSSD with a motto: Environment for Development. Lasting development needs a healthy environment. People living with a degraded environment stand little chance of rising from the cycles of poverty and despair which are at least partly responsible for the many tensions we see around us in today's world. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation has targets and timetables on issues such as fisheries and wildlife to ones on drinking water and sanitation that will, I believe, make a significant impact on global patterns of development. WSSD is already adding focus to the work of UNEP along with many other organisations and groups across the whole spectrum of society. Indeed, when environment ministers from across the globe meet at UNEP's headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, in early February 2003, the WSSD Plan and the challenge of taking it forward, of delivering real and meaningful results, will be at the centre of the talks and decisions.

In the lead-up to WSSD, Kofi Annan, the United Nations Secretary-General identified five areas where he hoped to see new initiatives and specific commitments to change—water, energy, health, agriculture and biodiversity (WEHAB). The second part of this report details how UNEP is working with its partners to achieve progress in these five priority areas. WSSD delivered progress in all these areas, both in the form of concrete commitments in the Plan of Implementation, and through new partnership and funding initiatives that will achieve substantial progress on the path to sustainable development.

There are other reasons for optimism. Canada ratified the Kyoto Protocol in December 2002, and there is every reason to believe that Russia will follow suit in 2003, bringing the Kyoto Protocol and its mechanisms for addressing climate change into force.

In Africa, a new spirit of cooperation and a new vision, espoused by African leaders in the guise of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), gives this most wondrous of continents, from where the human race took its first unsteady steps towards the diversity of civilisations and cultures we see today, a chance for a new start. Optimism is also engendered by the recognition explicit in NEPAD that developed nations who commit funds to assist developing ones need assurance that the cash will be wisely and effectively spent.

WSSD may have been a milestone but should not be seen in isolation from events such as the Doha, Qatar, trade talks and the Monterrey, Mexico, Finance for Development meeting, which also saw environmental considerations gain a firmer foothold on the development agenda. I am also particularly delighted over the outcome of the UNEP Global Judges Symposium held just prior to WSSD. Strengthening the use, development and awareness of laws is central to sustainable development.

What of the other highlights of 2002? The International Year of Mountains, which ended in the Global Mountain Summit in Bishkek, successfully advanced work worldwide to address mountain issues and highlighted the crucial importance of mountain ecosystems to people and wildlife living downstream of the world's 'water towers'. The International Year of Ecotourism, with its summit in Quebec, gave us some good pointers as to how we can match the modern enthusiasm for tourism and leisure with conserving nature and generating income for local people. However we clearly need to urgently re-visit this issue to chart a more robust and effective course.

UNEP also published two landmark publications—the third in the Global Environment Outlook series, *GEO-3* and the *Africa Environment Outlook*. These have not only contributed to our understanding of the threats and improvements humankind is creating for life on Earth, but are also building strong networks of researchers and centres in developing countries where environmental and developmental science is flourishing.

Working closely with the Global Environment Facility, the multi-billion dollar environment fund, UNEP has launched important new projects to restore damaged and degraded drylands in Africa. UNEP is also a partner in the largest project ever undertaken to build the skills of developing nations in the area of genetically modified crops and foods.

These are just some of the highlights of UNEP's year. The body of this report provides more detail about the wide variety of sectoral and cross-sectoral projects in which UNEP is involved. Yet, even this is only a snapshot. Behind each entry lies a hive of activity. All over the globe, meetings, symposia, workshops and any number of other training activities organised by and through UNEP's regional offices and its growing family of partners, are enhancing the capacity of countries and institutions, especially those in the developing world, to understand and address the environmental issues that we will have to face together over the coming decades.

This success of this dynamic network of partnerships was reflected at the Global Ministerial Environment Forum in Cartagena, Columbia, when countries agreed on a new, strengthened UNEP. It is gratifying to see that the organisation's funding is on the rise from a wider group of nations. This is a vote for the environment and a vote for UNEP's improved ability to deliver. We have every intention to live up to our new and increasing responsibilities, not only in this thirtieth year of UNEP's birth but in the months, years and decades to come.

Leadership for a sustainable future

The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation states that “good governance, within each country and at the international level, is essential for sustainable development.” UNEP supports the development of a coherent governance infrastructure for the protection of the Earth’s environment by, amongst others, helping to establish international agreements such as the successful Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, and providing policy advice to governments and institutions. For instance, UNEP is advising on the environmental component of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). UNEP also provides resources and training at the national level. Since the 1992 Earth Summit UNEP has helped nearly 100 developing countries and countries with economies in transition to develop environmental legislation and institutions.

The context for much of UNEP’s work in environmental governance is the Montevideo Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law, initially adopted by the UNEP Governing Council in 1982 and approved for a third ten-year programme in 2001. UNEP’s work to support a coherent international environmental governance architecture has also been greatly enhanced by the Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF). The GMEF is convened annually to review important and emerging policy issues in the field of the environment, with the UNEP Governing Council constituting the forum in its regular and special sessions.

Since its inaugural meeting in May 2000 the GMEF has been driving a process for examining and strengthening international environmental governance. To that end it created an Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Ministers whose 2002 report on improving coherence in international environmental policy making, improving the effectiveness of multilateral environmental agreements, and enhancing the role of UNEP was endorsed at WSSD, and subsequently by the UN General Assembly.



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“The environmental crises we confront have many causes. They include poverty, negligence and greed—but above all, failures of governance.”

*Kofi Annan,
Millennium Report*



Among the most important roles for UNEP in the context of international environmental governance is promoting increased coherence among environmental conventions—especially the growing family of biodiversity-related conventions and those dealing with chemicals and hazardous waste—and assisting developing countries and those with economies in transition to comply with their obligations under international and regional treaties. Promoting effective environmental governance at national level is therefore a UNEP priority. As part of its provision of training and resources for the development and implementation of national environmental legislation, UNEP organised a Global Judges Symposium which met in Johannesburg in August 2002, prior to WSSD. The resulting Johannesburg Principles on the Role of Law and Sustainable Development emphasise that an independent judiciary committed to implementing environmental laws is essential for sustainable development.

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan with his wife Nane and Dr. Jane Goodall at the Children's Earth Summit, Soweto, South Africa, during the World Summit for Sustainable Development, 26 August to 4 September 2002. Dr. Goodall is one of the world's leading primatologists and a special envoy for the UNEP Great Apes Survival Project (GRASP). World leaders at WSSD reaffirmed their commitment to securing a better future for all people, in all countries, for all generations.

LAW AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Just prior to WSSD, UNEP organised a symposium of 100 senior judges from around the world to discuss the effective national level implementation of environmental law. At the meeting Klaus Toepfer, UNEP Executive Director said: “We have over 500 international and regional agreements, treaties and deals covering everything from the protection of the ozone layer to the conservation of the oceans and seas. Almost all, if not all, countries have national environmental laws too. But unless these are complied with, unless they are enforced, then they are little more than symbols”.

Experts are convinced that the worldwide effort to crack down on pollution, challenge environmentally damaging developments, and comply with agreements covering issues such as hazardous wastes to the trade in endangered species is being undermined—partly as a result of weaknesses in many countries’ legal systems, but mainly as a result of the lax way in which these laws are being implemented and enforced. These weaknesses are particularly acute in many developing countries and in the nations of the former Soviet Union where lack of resources, the difficulties of turning international treaties into national laws, and lack of awareness, if not apathy, as a result of difficult economic conditions make it harder for cases to reach or succeed in the courts.

The Global Judges Symposium followed a series of six regional symposia designed to enhance the role of the judiciary in promoting the implementation of environmental law. The outcome of the symposium was the Johannesburg Principles on the Role of Law and Sustainable Development. In agreeing to strengthen the application of existing

UNEP SUPPORT FOR AFRICA

UNEP places great emphasis on building national capacity for sustainable development. This includes helping countries to participate fully in the development of international environmental policy and in negotiations for multilateral agreements, and helping countries upon their request to develop and implement environmental laws. UNEP is active in all regions of the world—examples include its work in support of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean and recent assistance to Afghanistan to establish an environmental affairs ministry—but accords priority to Africa, in line with the United Nations Special Initiative for Africa.

Africa faces the greatest environmental, health and poverty challenges and it has the fewest technological, human, institutional and financial resources with which to deal with them. UNEP is supporting African governments to achieve sustainable development in a number of ways. It hosts the secretariat for the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) and is actively involved in helping establish mechanisms for the implementation of the environmental component of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). UNEP also supported the organisation of the second Africa Round Table on Cleaner Production, which has given further momentum to promoting and implementing the concept of cleaner production in Africa. There are already eight UNIDO/UNEP National Cleaner

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