

Health & Environment

Growing evidence and new understanding about the mounting risks to health and ecosystem degradation, as well as positive contributions to health from ecosystems services, mandates a fresh approach on health and environment linkages

There is an increased recognition that sustained progress on internationally agreed sustainable development goals (SDGs) and multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) will require firm global, regional and country level commitment and actions to address the environmental root causes of ill health.

UNEA 4 adopted an Implementation Plan "Toward a Pollution Free Planet" which (i) builds on and takes forward the pollution-related UNEA outcomes, and (ii) proposes action areas based on opportunities and solutions to address the capacity gaps and challenges related to pollution and (iii) contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by preventing and combating pollution.



The Goal

"Towards a Pollution Free Planet" – by helping countries and stakeholders to enhance their capacity to take action on pollution by providing the needed understanding, capacity development and tools on the nexus between environment and health"

The actions

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| | <p>Knowledge: Science for evidence-based policy</p> |
| | <p>Implementation: Strengthening of implementation, design of incentives, integrated policy assessments, regulatory innovations, enhanced capacity building</p> |
| | <p>Infrastructure: Technologies and innovation, circularity</p> |
| | <p>Awareness: Communication, education and consumer information</p> |
| | <p>Leadership: Mobilizing stakeholders, leaders and partners to address different forms of pollution</p> |

Key results to date

- A new **Memorandum of Understanding** between the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and WHO signed in 2018.
- The adoption of **The Implementation Plan 'Towards a Pollution free Planet'** by UNEA 4.
- The third **Inter-ministerial Conference on Health and Environment in Africa** from was jointly organized by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the UN Environment Programme and hosted by the Government of Gabon on 6–9 November 2019 in Libreville, Gabon which adopted a 10-year strategic action plan for an increased coverage of health and environment interventions for primary prevention in public health and preservation of ecosystems integrity.
- **Ministerial Declaration on "Health, Environment and Climate Change"** adopted promulgated at the 22nd session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on 15 November 2016.
- The **BreatheLife campaign**, a joint campaign of WHO-UN Environment Programme and the Climate and Clean Air Coalition on raising awareness of local authorities and governments to address air pollution.
- Ministerial Conference on **Innovative Solutions to Pollution in South East and Southern Europe** which adopted The Ministerial Joint Regional Vision on "Innovative Solutions to Pollution".

Expected impacts by 2021

- Political, business, and financial leaders take an active role on the pollution agenda
- The private sector integrates the sound management of chemicals and waste into business planning and operations
- Chemicals and waste are managed using a circular approach that aims to eliminate human and environmental exposure to contaminated air, water and land
- By 2030: 30% or 50% of the world's population lives in areas where World Health Organization Air Quality Guidelines and interim targets are attained
- Levels of mercury, lead, cadmium and selected Persistent Organic Pollutants in humans and foodstuffs are reduced
- A greater percentage of urban waste is regularly collected, recycled, and well-managed.

Acting on the Sustainable Development Goals

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|  <p>1 NO POVERTY</p> | <p>Cleaner environments improve worker health and productivity.</p> |  <p>2 ZERO HUNGER</p> | <p>Growing food in non-contaminated soil helps to fight hunger and ensure the provision of safe food.</p> |  <p>3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING</p> | <p>Action on pollution substantially reduces the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination.</p> |
|  <p>4 QUALITY EDUCATION</p> | <p>A clean environment promotes high-quality education, which enables the acquisition of the knowledge and skills need to promote sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles.</p> |  <p>5 GENDER EQUALITY</p> | <p>Pollution reduction promotes equality, for example by reducing the burden of fetching clean water and exposure to indoor air pollution.</p> |  <p>6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION</p> | <p>Better-managed freshwater ecosystems and cleaner water significantly reduce the number of deaths from diarrhoeal diseases.</p> |
|  <p>7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY</p> | <p>Access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy can cut indoor air pollution, which will particularly benefit women and children.</p> |  <p>8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH</p> | <p>Reduced exposure to pollution leads to improved health and well-being of workers and therefore increased productivity and economic growth.</p> |  <p>9 INDUSTRY INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE</p> | <p>Pollution avoidance through the adoption of green technologies and ecosystem-based solutions fosters innovation and sustainability in industry and infrastructure.</p> |
|  <p>10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES</p> | <p>Pollution governance and action can ensure that no group or community is made to bear a disproportionate share of the harmful effects of pollution.</p> |  <p>11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES</p> | <p>Sustainable transport, waste management, buildings and industry lead to cleaner air in cities.</p> |  <p>12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION</p> | <p>Resource efficiency and circularity in materials and input use reduce pollution and waste and contribute to sustainable consumption and production.</p> |
|  <p>13 CLIMATE ACTION</p> | <p>Clean energy and low-carbon policies reduce air pollution and mitigate climate change impacts.</p> |  <p>14 LIFE BELOW WATER</p> | <p>Action on marine pollution reduces potential bioaccumulation of toxic substances as well as habitat destruction and helps to maintain healthy fisheries and ecosystems.</p> |  <p>15 LIFE ON LAND</p> | <p>Integrating ecosystem and biodiversity values into policies, development plans and poverty reduction strategies supports improved land management and avoids dumping and other forms of pollution.</p> |
|  <p>16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS</p> | <p>Good pollution-related governance reduces environmental burdens and injustices and can enhance the availability of resources for the underserved.</p> |  <p>17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS</p> | <p>Global partnerships to address pollution can have positive impacts on human health and well-being, job creation and worker productivity, in addition to environmental benefits.</p> | | |

About the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

UNEP is the leading global voice on the environment. It provides leadership and encourages partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations. UNEP works with governments, the private sector, civil society and with other UN entities and international organizations around the world

About the Chemicals and Health Branch

UNEP Chemicals and Health Branch works to minimize the adverse effects of chemicals and waste on human health and the environment. Chemicals are integral to almost all sectors of society, bringing important benefits in areas from medicine and agriculture to consumer goods, clean technologies and poverty alleviation. While chemicals and waste are major contributors to world economies, their sound management is essential to avoiding risks to human health and ecosystems as well as substantial costs to national economies.

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