

COMPILATION OF INTERNATIONALLY AGREED ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES



DISCLAIMER

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BACKGROUND

This booklet contains a compilation of existing internationally agreed environmental goals and objectives, which have been drawn from the outcome documents of relevant United Nations summits and conferences, resolutions of the General Assembly, decisions of other global intergovernmental conferences, multilateral environmental agreements and decisions of their governing bodies. The compilation is intended to provide an overview of existing internationally agreed environmental goals and objectives and is not intended as an exhaustive list of such goals and objectives.

A first draft of the compilation was prepared with the assistance of a small group of independent experts and circulated at the Meeting of Senior Government Officials Expert in Environmental Law to Prepare a Fourth Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law (Montevideo Programme IV), held in Nairobi from 29 September to 3 October 2008. Thereafter, comments received from the secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements were incorporated into the draft compilation. The preliminary compilation was submitted to the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environmental Forum at its twenty-fifth session, in February 2009, and, building upon the discussions at that session, the Executive Director circulated in March 2009 the preliminary compilation to all Governments for comments.

The revised preliminary compilation was submitted to an open-ended meeting of government designated experts in Geneva in March 2010, during which the representatives of 75 Governments and 13 international organizations considered it. The compilation was prepared on the basis of the methodology identified at that meeting, which is presented in the introduction to the compilation. The comments from the representatives received during the meeting and thereafter have been incorporated into the compilation as appropriate. It may also be noted that the compilation served as a background document in the process for the preparation of the fifth Global Environment Outlook report, in 2010.

The following 10 thematic areas are covered in the compilation:

- (a) Air pollution and air quality;
- (b) Biodiversity;
- (c) Chemicals and wastes;

- (d) Climate change;
- (e) Energy;
- (f) Forests;
- (g) Freshwater;
- (h) Oceans and seas;
- (i) Soil, land use, land degradation and desertification;
- (j) Environmental governance.

With regard to many internationally agreed environmental goals and objectives listed in the compilation, there has been considerable progress over the past decades in reaching agreement in these fields by adopting legally binding or non-legally binding instruments. At the same time, the international community continues to face significant challenges in achieving those goals and objectives. Increasing coherence among efforts to achieve those goals and objectives, for instance by identifying a strategic direction in each thematic area, might help facilitate more coordinated and coherent implementation of commitments in achieving those goals and objectives while avoiding duplication of effort.

The compilation was originally produced as document UNEP/GCSS.XII/CRP.2 submitted to the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum at its twelfth special session held in Nairobi from 20 to 22 February 2012. The compilation was presented in the mentioned document without formal editing. For technical reasons, the annexes to the compilation are not presented herein.

The UNEP Secretariat acknowledges with appreciation the generous financial support of the Government of Switzerland for the process of preparing the Compilation and producing this booklet.

I. Introduction

1. The compilation provides an overview of existing internationally agreed environmental goals and objectives.
2. It contains information on goals and objectives drawn from the existing international treaties in the field of the environment and international non-legally binding instruments as referred to in paragraph 17 below. Where there is a provision clearly stating the goals and objectives in an instrument, such provision is quoted in the compilation under an appropriate thematic area. Where there is no such provision in the instrument, the information is drawn from the preamble or substantive provisions of the instrument which contain the statement concerning the goals and objectives of the instrument.
3. The compilation is intended to contribute to better informing Governments and relevant stakeholders in all countries. It is hoped that the compilation will be used as a practical tool to facilitate cooperation between relevant agencies and offices to achieve such goals and objectives in a more coherent and harmonized manner.
4. The compilation will be a living document that will be developed in the future to refine its contents and add further information on the basis of comments and further inputs.

A. Geographical scope

5. The compilation covers global environmental goals and objectives.
6. The compilation also refers to regional environmental goals and objectives where a regional perspective exists. These are contained in a separate section under the respective themes, clearly keeping them distinct from global environmental goals and objectives.

B. Legally binding instruments and non-legally binding instruments

7. The existing international legally binding instruments and non-legally binding instruments are the sources from which the relevant goals and objectives are drawn. The compilation presents the text of the relevant parts of those instruments. Acronyms will be spelled out and references will be included in full for ease of reading.

8. The distinction between the legally binding instruments and those of a non-legally binding nature is clearly shown in the compilation. The distinction is based on the nature of the document where the specific goal or objective is contained.
9. Recitals from the preamble of a legally binding instrument are only included when the provisions governing substantive obligations under the instrument do not contain clearly defined goals or objectives and there is therefore a need to fill the gaps in interpreting the intended objectives of such instrument.
10. The status of participation by countries in the respective legally binding instruments (e.g., the total number of countries that have ratified a treaty and for which it has entered into force) is reflected in the compilation, in order to signify that the goals and objectives under such instruments have legally binding effects only on parties to the respective instruments. This information will be provided in a table annexed to the compilation.

C. Structures in which goals and objectives are presented

11. Sustainable development is recognized as a common vision and ultimate goal, with the environment being one of its three pillars. No attempt has been made, however, in the initial preparation of the compilation to present an overarching common goal under which various thematic goals and objectives might be presented. The compilation presents relevant goals and objectives under specific themes identified. Regional goals and objectives are presented under each thematic area but in a separate section. Legally binding and non-legally binding goals and objectives are presented in a clearly distinguished way. Those principles set forth as part of a global process in internationally negotiated and agreed instruments (e.g., the Rio principles) are addressed in an appropriate manner, after having examined their relevance to the thematic areas on a case-by-case basis.
12. Since the existing international instruments often reflect delicately balanced packages of political compromises and commitments, the compilation presents the relevant goals and objectives in a manner that will uphold the integrity of the instrument.

D. Themes

13. A comprehensive range of issues in the field of the environment is covered in the compilation. Themes are identified on the basis of environmental media , and also processes and procedures relating to environmental matters. Such themes are not confined to the programmatic areas currently dealt with by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) under its programme of work, but rather cover the areas addressed in general by States and relevant organizations.
14. The following are the thematic areas under which relevant goals and objectives are identified for the compilation:
 - Air pollution and air quality;
 - Biodiversity;
 - Chemicals and wastes;
 - Climate change;
 - Energy;
 - Forests;
 - Freshwater;
 - Oceans and seas;
 - Soil, land use, land degradation and desertification.
 - Environmental governance

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