

MEASURING PROGRESS

Environmental Goals & Gaps



A word cloud of environmental agreements and initiatives, including:

- Agenda 21
- Global Environment Outlook
- Rio Earth Summit
- UNFCCC
- Montreal Protocol
- UNCED
- Kyoto Protocol
- RAMSAR Convention
- General Assembly
- Basel Convention
- JPOI
- CMS
- UNCLOS
- UNCED
- UNCCD
- Stockholm Convention
- Aichi Targets
- Chemicals
- Drinking Water
- MDGs
- Sustainable Development



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Measuring Progress
Environmental Goals & Gaps

Foreword

If we measured the world's response to environmental challenges solely by the number of treaties and agreements that have been adopted, then the situation looks impressive. Over 500 international environmental agreements have been concluded since 1972, the year of the Stockholm Conference and the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

These include landmark conventions on issues such as trade in endangered species, hazardous wastes, climate change, biological diversity and desertification. Collectively, these reflect an extraordinary effort to install the policies, aims and desires of countries world-wide to achieve sustainable development.

Yet despite the impressive number of legal texts and many good intentions, real progress in solving the environmental challenges themselves has been much less comprehensive, a point clearly underlined in the Global Environment Outlook-5, for which this report *"Measuring Progress: Environmental Goals and Gaps"* and a previous publication *"Keeping Track of Our Changing Environment: From Rio to Rio+20"* are companion products leading up to Rio+20.

This report outlines findings from a UNEP study that, with support from the Government of Switzerland, has catalogued and analyzed existing "Global Environmental Goals" contained in the international agreements and conventions. It asks the fundamental question as to why the aims and goals of these policy instruments have often fallen far short of their original ambition and intentions. One possible reason is that many of the goals are simply not specific enough; the few goals that are specific and measurable appear to have a much better record of success.

These include goals to phase out lead in gasoline, ozone depleting substances (ODS) and certain persistent organic pollutants (POPs), specific Millennium Development Goal targets calling to halve

the number of people without access to safe drinking water and improved sanitation, and targets to increase the number and extent of protected areas. Indeed, even when measurable targets have been set but not actually met, they have usually led to positive change and often to significant change.

The vast majority of goals, however, are found to be "aspirational" in nature. They lack specific targets, which generate obvious difficulties in measuring progress towards them. In addition, many aspirational goals are not supported by adequate data that can be used to measure progress, global freshwater quality being one stark example.

It is clear that if agreements and conventions are to achieve their intended purpose, the international community needs to consider specific and measurable goals when designing such treaties, while organizing the required data gathering and putting in place proper tracking systems from the outset.

A set of "Sustainable Development Goals", as proposed by the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Sustainability, could be an excellent opportunity and starting point to improve this situation while representing another positive outcome from Rio+20, two decades after the Rio Earth Summit of 1992 and four decades after the Stockholm Conference.



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Introduction

UNEP's Global Environment Outlook (GEO) reports provide the international community with up-to-date information on the state and trends of the global environment. The fifth report in the series, GEO-5, published in 2012, measures progress towards - and gaps in - achieving global environmental goals (GEGs).

Concept of global environmental goals

Over the last few decades, a great number of legally binding and non-legally binding goals and objectives have been adopted as part of over 500 multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) negotiated through a variety of different international and regional forums to address environmental degradation. Despite this growing body of norms, the global environmental situation continues to deteriorate. In a complex and fragmented system of rules, the first challenge is to have a clear understanding of what goals exist. To assist the international community in that task, the idea was conceived to establish a compilation of global environmental goals (GEGs). As the debate on the establishment of sustainable development goals (SDGs) intensifies, the compiled GEGs, along with

the findings of GEO-5, may serve as useful contributions to this process.

How did the GEGs come about?

A compilation of GEGs (UNEP/GCSS.XII/CRP.2 of 2012) was based on a thorough consultation with experts and governments. A first draft list of global environmental goals was compiled by a small group of independent experts and was shared with senior government officials during a meeting on the Montevideo Programme IV in Nairobi, Kenya, in late

2008. The draft compilation then underwent a review by the secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements. Building on those discussions, the compilation was shared with all governments for review in March 2009. During an open-ended, multi-stakeholder meeting which convened government representatives of 75 countries and representatives of 13 international organizations

in Geneva, Switzerland, in March 2010, the methodology for selecting the goals was decided and the compilation finalized by the UNEP Secretariat.



Introduction

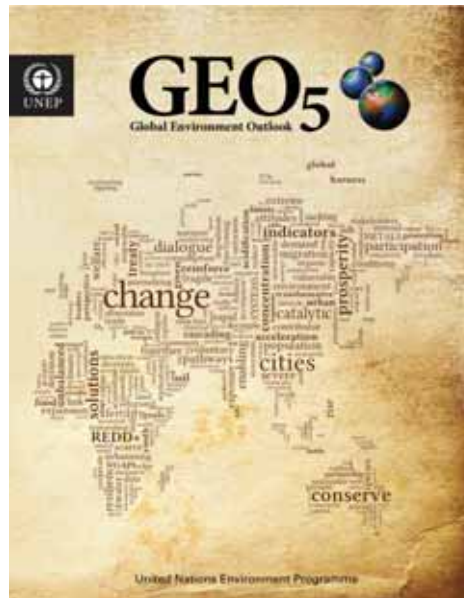
Overview of the GEGs

The compilation provides an overview of internationally agreed environmental goals and objectives. These are drawn from existing global and regional multilateral environmental agreements and international non-legally binding instruments. While some are explicitly set out as commitments within a treaty, declaration or other instrument, others are drawn from the instrument's preamble or a substantive provision. The compilation also contains goals both with and without specific targets. The source of a particular goal, its legal status, i.e. whether or not it is legally binding, as well as its geographical application, are clearly set out in the compilation.

The sources of goals include the major multilateral environmental agreements, such as the Vienna Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Basel Convention on Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Waste, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Kyoto Protocol, as well as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Goals are also derived from non-legally binding instruments such as the 1972 Stockholm Declaration, the 1992 Rio Declaration and Agenda 21, the 2002 Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the Millennium Summit Declaration as well as outcomes of conferences convened under the auspices of specialized agencies.

Global environmental goals in GEO-5

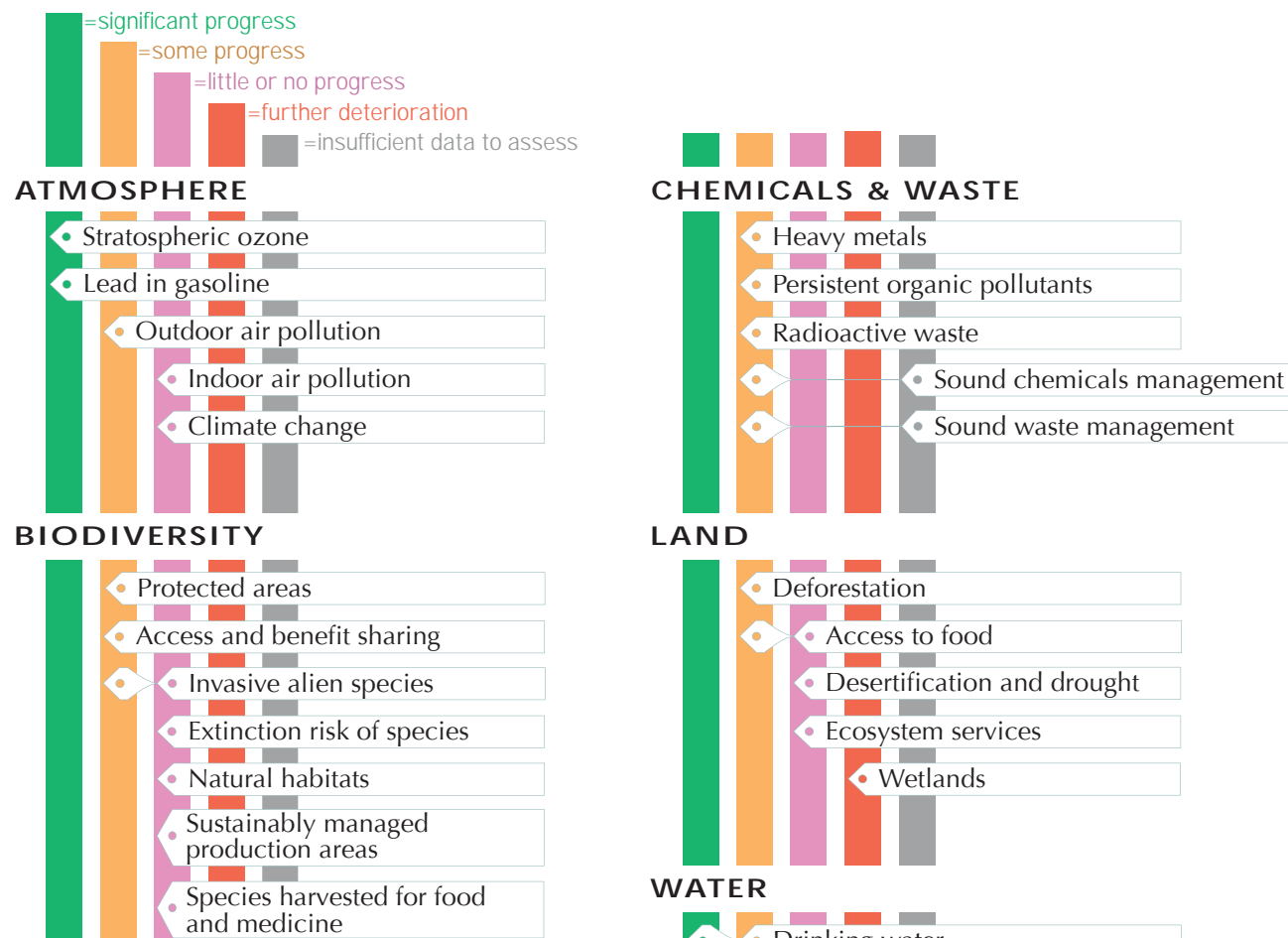
The process for the fifth Global Environment Outlook (GEO-5) established a High-level Intergovernmental Panel that identified the most important and appropriate goals for analysis in GEO-5, using the GEGs compilation as a starting point. The panel consisted of 20 government representatives from all six UNEP regions.



GEO-5 assessed progress towards 90 goals and objectives specifically geared to respond to some of the world's most pressing environment and development challenges. It also identified important gaps, using key indicators and time-series datasets, where available, to measure progress. In many cases, however, specific, measurable targets and/or sufficient data were lacking. In these cases, GEO-5 authors—both independent and government-nominated—made an assessment of progress based on the best available data and findings in the scientific literature, which was peer-reviewed and reflected in the final GEO-5 report.

A summary of the GEO-5 assessment of progress towards a number of environmental goals is presented in the “Environment Scorecard 2012”. Progress on each issue is analyzed in more detail in the rest of this publication.

Environment Scorecard 2012



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