

The Committee of Permanent Representatives
Briefing Session
7 February 2017
UN Office at Nairobi, Gigiri
Conference Room 4

Environment under Review

Update on Subprogramme

Introduction

The Environment under Review subprogramme was established in 2014 with the aim to empower stakeholders in their policy and decision making by providing scientific information and knowledge and keeping the world environment under review. The work under the Subprogramme focuses on strengthening the interface between science, policy and governance by bridging the gap between the producers and users of environmental information and better linking science with policy.

- **Assessment** where UN Environment facilitates global, regional and national policy-making from environmental information made available on open platforms
- **Early warning** where UN Environment enables better policy planning that incorporates information on emerging environmental issues
- **Information management** where UN Environment enhances the capacity of countries to generate, access, analyze, use and communicate environmental information and knowledge

The Subprogramme plays a leading role in responding to the United Nations Environment Assembly Resolution 2/5 “*Delivering on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*” with a portfolio of projects including the Global Environment Outlook, ‘Environment Live’ (UN Environment’s online global knowledge platform that provides open access to data and information formerly known as UNEP Live), the Frontiers series on emerging issues as well as capacity development efforts to strengthen of the Sustainable Development Goal indicators frameworks and the reporting on environmental information. The work on air quality monitoring and assessment currently embedded in the Subprogramme will move to the ‘Chemicals, Waste and Air Quality subprogramme’ from 2018 onwards.

This briefing presents progress made on specific projects in the portfolio and major milestones coming up for the Subprogramme in 2017.

A) Global Environment Outlook

The Global Environment Outlook is UN Environment’s flagship integrated environmental assessment; published every 4-5 years. It regularly reports on the state of the global environment, policy responses in addressing major environmental challenges, and future prospects or outlook for

the environment. The Global Environment Outlook is also an important tool for tracking progress towards environmental goals, including the environmental dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Five comprehensive global assessments have been produced by UN Environment since 1997, each expanding and improving the scope and depth of analysis of the preceding edition. The Global Environment Outlook is situated amongst an array of theme-specific environmental assessments conducted by other international bodies (e.g. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, UN General Assembly, etc.) and strives to consolidate and assess progress across four environmental domains, namely Air, Water, Biota and Land while also considering the social and economic drivers that are influencing this environmental change. The hallmark and main value-added of the GEO assessments is the analysis of these interactions, both positive and negative, and consideration of how actions beyond the environmental domain can influence and be influenced by our environment.

The 6th edition of the Global Environment Outlook was requested by Member States through UN Environment Assembly Resolution 1/4¹ in June 2014. The assessment process began in early 2015 with a series of Regional Environmental Information Network conferences to help define the priorities for the assessment in each region and the production of six regional environmental assessments (add URL) that will form the foundation of the global assessment, in particular for the state of the environment and the policy response. The first author's meeting for the sixth Global Environment Outlook will take place from 20 to 24 February 2017 at the ESRIN facilities in Frascati, with the generous support of the Government of Italy. The second and third authors meeting are planned for May and October 2017, and funding and hosting arrangements are being explored.

A progress report on the state and trends will be delivered for the third UN Environment Assembly in December 2017

The full Global Environment Outlook report and its Summary for Policy Makers will be delivered by the fourth UN Environment Assembly in 2019.

B) Strengthening the Sustainable Development indicators framework, follow-up and review

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals requires integration of the goals in science, policy and governance; monitoring and reporting on the goals; and public engagement

As requested by UNEA 2/5 Delivering on the Environmental Dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the project focuses on:

- Inputs to the UN Economic and Social Council and the High Level Political Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals
- Developing methodologies and collecting data for specific Sustainable Development Goal indicators (under the auspices of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on the Sustainable Development Goal Indicators).

¹ Paragraph 8 of Resolution 1/4 states "Requests the Executive Director, within the programme of work and budget, to undertake the preparation of the sixth Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6), supported by UNEP Live, with the scope, objectives and procedures of GEO-6 to be defined by a transparent global intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder consultation informed by document UNEP/EA.1/INF/14, resulting in a scientifically credible, peer-reviewed GEO-6 and its accompanying summary for policymakers, to be endorsed by the United Nations Environment Assembly no later than 2018"

- All ongoing work of the Science Division on monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals is aligned with the Inter-Agency and Expert Group. UN Environment is responsible for 26 of the indicators and is supporting many others
- Embedding the Sustainable Development Goals in the scientific assessments, policy support and governance work of UN Environment
- The Inter Agency and Expert Group on SDG s has a mandate from the UN Statistical Commission which was tasked by the General Assembly to develop The SDG Global Indicator Framework
- UN Environment has been requested by the Group to be Custodian Agency for 26 Sustainable Development Goal indicators, co-custodian for 6 and involved in many others

C) Emerging Issues

UN Environment's Frontiers 2017 report will include the following issues: Anti-microbial resistance; off-grid distributed solar power; marine protected areas; environmental dimension of displacement and technological developments in nano-materials and chemicals; preventative measures against sand and dust-storms. Major findings from the 2017 UN Environment Frontiers report will be used as input to several ministerial meetings and will be published in full in May, in anticipation of World Environment Day.

D) Environment Live

A short presentation will be given of the redesigned Environment Live platform, focusing on environmental information in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Global Environment Outlook 6 and the 2017 UN Environment Assembly.

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